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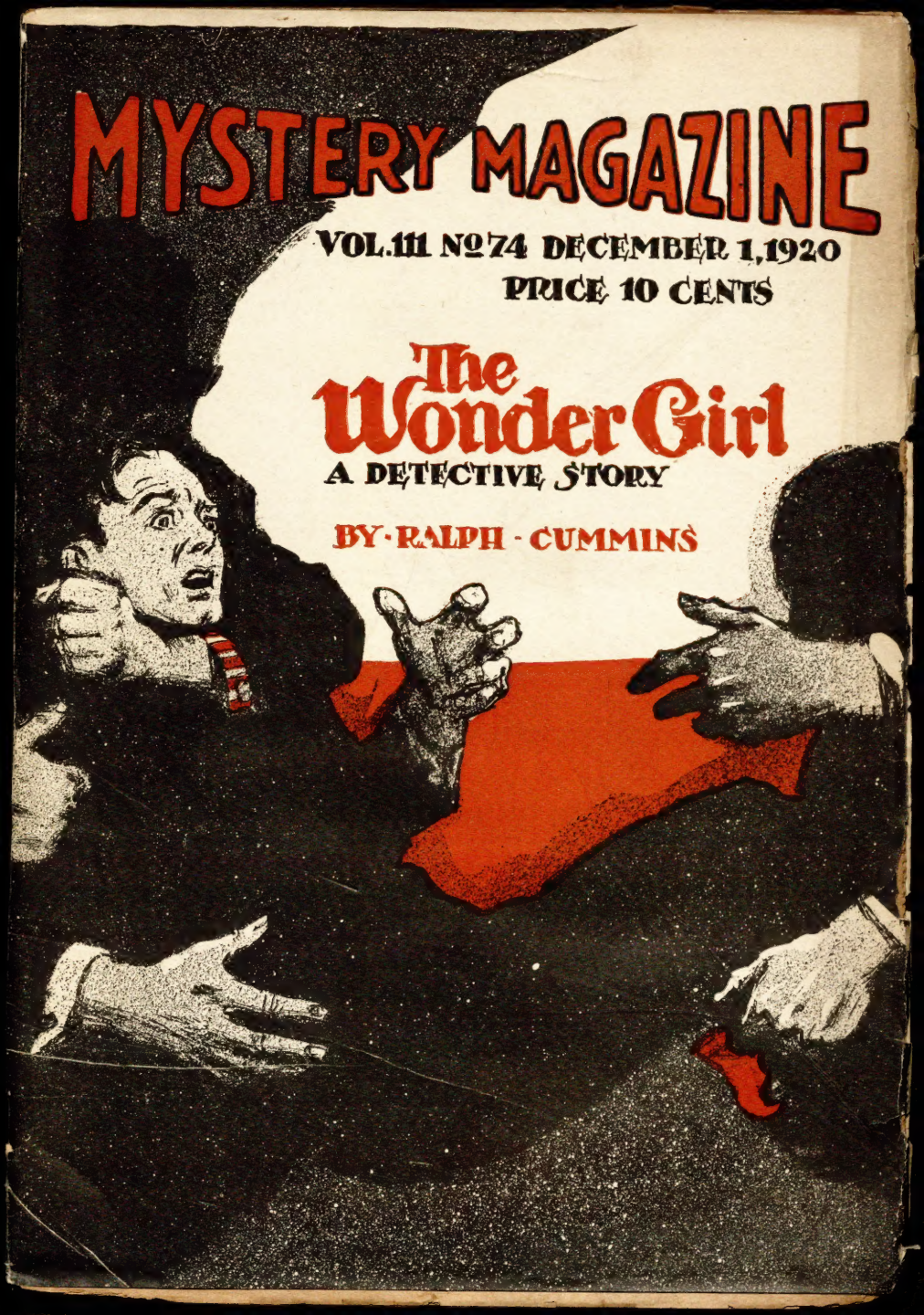
The Wonder Girl

A DETECTIVE STORY

BY RALPH CUMMINS



Read "On The Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon, in Our Next Issue.

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THE WONDER GIRL

A DETECTIVE STORY

By RALPH CUMMINS

CHAPTER ONE

FRANK STAFFORD regarded the bundle of currency with a wry grin and tried to force it back into the hands of his unsteady companion.

"Aw, give it to the manager, Chet," he objected. "I'm driving back to Los Angeles tonight. Why, I'd have a swell chance of taking five thousand through with me."

"'At a' right." The round-faced, blue-eyed young man waved his hand airily and sagged across the little table. "You jes' take 'er home for me—'at's a boy! No danger—hide 'er in a tire. I'm some lucky—huh? Won 'er all on Silver Heels—yessir. Better sthay, Frank—goin' t' have a big night."

"Nothing doing. I've got to go back—got an appointment with the big boss for noon to-morrow. But, holy smoke—all this——" Instinctively he shifted the roll of bills out of sight behind the litter of bottles and glasses.

Outside the little booth in which the two men sat Tia Juana's Monte Carlo roared unmusically. Around the gaming tables and along the fifty-foot bar, the pushing, laughing, joy-mad race crowd waited for the last train of the night. Stafford tucked the money in his pocket and rose.

"All right, you old fool, I'll take it, but I hope I am held up, you—you——" But the other was lurching through the archway toward the bar.

Stafford groaned at the thought of the lonely two-hundred mile drive, and hunted up his little roadster parked and safely locked in a side street. Standing beside the car, he lighted a cigarette

and tried to think of a safe place in which to hide the danger-inspiring package. Finally he grinned and glanced furtively about.

The sidewalk was well lighted and filled with a jostling throng, but the street side of the automobile was in the shadow.

With careless movements, Stafford walked around to the dark side. Whistling gaily, he pulled out the seat cushion, cut a slit in the back edge of it and poked the money in among the springs.

Well pleased with his clever idea, but depressed at the thought of the long night drive, the young man climbed into the car and switched on the lights. He had just produced the first discordant whir from his starter when a figure appeared beside him.

"I—I beg your pardon," came a girlish voice, just a trifle unsteadily.

Stafford whirled to face a tall young woman in a light sport suit and a rakish turban.

"Oh—I——" The girl was deeply flustered. "Will you"—she laughed brokenly—"what I'm trying to say is—can you give me a lift to San Diego?"

"Why, of course." Stafford smiled reassuringly, at the same time appraising the girl with a shrewd glance. "Glad to have company," he continued. "My name's Stafford—I'm from Los Angeles."

He expected the girl to show a measure of relief in response to his frank introduction, but she seemed hardly to notice what he was saying. At any rate, she showed no inclination to mention her own name or to explain the why of her request. At first Stafford thought she was excited over something, but that was only at first. Before they had driven to the border the charm of the girl at his side had forced everything else from his mind. She laughed and talked, and had Stafford been himself he would have suspected that she was exerting herself to keep him from thinking. When they reached the line and submitted to the search of the custom officials, he did not even think of the money concealed in the cushion.

The liquor-seeking officers were very thorough. They asked Stafford and his passenger to get out, and proceeded to examine the car with the greatest care. But even when one of them pulled out the seat cushions and shook them Stafford did not think of the hidden treasure. The girl, however, was strangely anxious to get started, and when one of the officers began patting the back cushions she turned the battery of her charms upon him.

"Oh, can't we go now?" She caught up the electric flashlight from the seat. "Here, let me help you so we can go." She began shooting the light into the dark cavern under the top. The man left the back cushions and smiled.

"All right," he announced, and passed to the following car.

The strange girl proved to be a most interesting companion. She chattered continually about everything except herself, and laughed easily whenever Stafford tried to switch the conversation to personalities. However, Stafford was too deeply interested in the girl herself to be curious. Her ripply, girlish voice, her cheery laugh, her bright eyes and full red lips as he saw them while passing through the lighted places, made a deep impression. Before he realized it they were entering San Diego.

"Where shall I take you?" asked Stafford.

"Oh, just drop me wherever you're going. You—I suppose you'll leave the car at a garage for the night."

Stafford laughed dismally. "Hardly. I'm not that lucky. I'm driving through to Los Angeles to-night."

"Oh!" the girl exclaimed sharply, then coughed. But at Stafford's inquiring glance she recovered. "You—you startled me. You see, I had been wishing you were going farther. I am going to Los Angeles myself to-night. I was going on that late train."

"Why, that's fine!" exclaimed Stafford. "I had an awful grouch on over the thought of that lonely ride."

"Then you—you don't mind taking me through?"

"You'll be saving my life. Well, let's get a bite to eat before we go on."

She made no objections, and Stafford prepared to stop at a little restaurant that faced the Plaza. But it was still early in the evening, and all the parking space was occupied. He drove on.

"We'll leave the car down on F street and walk back," he said. "It's only——"

"Oh, no!" objected his companion, and later Stafford wondered at the alarm in her voice. "You mustn't leave your car—it might be stolen."

Stafford laughed. "Oh, I guess it's safe enough. I have a double lock system."

Luckily he found a hole for the car almost opposite the restaurant door.

"Now we'll get a table right by the window," suggested the girl; "then we'll keep the car in sight."

During the meal the strange girl seemed to redouble her efforts to entertain the now thoroughly befuddled young man. He left the restaurant in a daze, and all during the long ride he could only listen to her chatter and dream. And when she grew tired and nestled toward him, Stafford let his imagination soar. By the time they reached Los Angeles, light was showing in the east and a wonderful hope was coming to Stafford.

"I know a place where we can have breakfast," he said. "Then I'll take you home. But, say, you've never told me your name."

"Oh, my name doesn't matter." She did not look at him, and at once Stafford was sorry that he spoke. Of course she thought he was trying to presume upon the service. He hastened to laugh the subject aside.

They alighted. The girl hopped about on one foot and swung her arms.

"Surely you don't have to lock your car up now," she chided as Stafford pawed about for his safety device. "Why, it's daylight—and we'll watch it."

Stafford smiled good-naturedly and joined her at once. He was too far gone to think of her fears in San Diego. They entered the restaurant. The girl halted at the desk beside the door.

"Won't you go on and order?" she asked pleasantly. "I'd like to telephone."

Stafford found a well-screened little alcove and ordered a mighty breakfast for two. Then he dreamed of the Wonder Girl he had met so strangely. But the strangeness of the meeting was overshadowed by the memory of her comradely smile and friendly good-fellowship. He was aroused by the waiter.

"Will you have breakfast now, sir? The lady did not come back."

"Did not come back?" Stafford blinked sleepily. "Why, she just stepped into the telephone booth."

"But after she telephoned she went outside—that was twenty minutes ago."

Stafford rose hurriedly. Something cold and heavy seemed to press him down. He almost ran to the door and looked out. The street was deserted.

Where could she have gone? He walked to the curb and again looked up and down. There was no one in sight. He returned to the doorway and faced the street as he fumbled for a cigarette. He struck a match and raised it to light the cigarette. Then he blinked and let the match burn his fingers. With a quick gesture he drew his hand across his eyes and glared into the street. His car was gone!

CHAPTER TWO

THE operative from the Casskaden Detective Agency looked back from the door with a confident jerk of his big head.

"Don't you worry, Mr. Stafford. If that car can be found the Casskaden Agency can do it, but"—he ducked his head again—"we don't like that 'no question' stuff. We're strong on sending those kids up."

Stafford gave an impatient shrug. "Forget it, I want my car back—that's all. If you catch the thief, just bring—er—him here. We'll have a talk."

After the detective left, Stafford arose and paced across his room. It certainly was a rotten world. Here he had lost Chet Mason's money, and more, he had lost a life-long dream that was just on the verge of dissolving into a glorious reality. Again he tried to think of some explanation that would place the beautiful stranger beyond suspicion as the thief who had stolen his car. And as before he came to the same barrier. If she had not taken the machine why had she left the restaurant without speaking to him?

His reverie was interrupted by the tinkle of the telephone.

"A lady to see you, Mr. Stafford," mumbled the exchange girl.

With his thoughts unshaken by curiosity Stafford took the elevator down to the lobby. He gave one glance at the figure beside the desk and gasped. It was his Wonder Girl.

"Oh, Mr. Stafford!" She took a step toward him and reached out her hand impulsively. "I'm sorry to trouble you, but I—I believe I left my purse in your car."

Stafford could not speak for the choking wave of relief. Then she did not steal his machine.

"You lost your purse?" He grinned foolishly into her puzzled frown. "If it's in the car—say, why did you run off and leave me?"

"Run away and leave you?" There was a flash in her eyes. "I like that! When I came out of the telephone booth I heard the machine and looked out. You were just driving away."

Stafford became himself again. "Explanations are in order," he said. "I waited in the restaurant twenty minutes."

"You mean that you did not drive the car away?" she asked.

"I did not! It was stolen."

"Stolen!"

There was alarm in her exclamation, but at once her lips pressed together, and her eyes seemed to bore into Stafford. He found himself uncomfortable under her puzzling scrutiny.

"Yes," he hastened to explain. "The waiter finally told me that you were gone. But—well—I may get it back. I have a detective agency after it."

"A detective?"

Somehow Stafford felt that there was suspicion in her manner. Did she think that he was lying about the missing car?

But all at once she changed. "I hope you find the car"—she smiled brightly—"and my purse. Now—I must go."

However, she showed a slight hesitancy, the cause of which Stafford readily guessed.

"If the loss of your purse has inconvenienced you," he said, "I'll be glad to help you out. I——"

"You're very kind." She moved impulsively closer to him and looked up with childlike trustfulness. "If you'll lend me a nickel I'd like to telephone. My—some one will come after me."

"Of course—don't you want more? Why not let me take you home?" Stafford was boyishly eager.

"No." She accepted the small coin and glanced up with an embarrassed smile. "But you—you may invite me to—to lunch. I'm starving!"

"Fine!" Stafford started to lead her away, but she held back, laughing.

"I must telephone first. I'll be right back."

She was gone ten minutes, but the happy hour that he spent with her over the lunch amply

repaid him for everything. All too soon she rose hurriedly and left him. Stafford mooned about the lobby for half an hour, then went up to his room.

He paused in the doorway and stared. The place was a wreck. Every drawer of the dresser was emptied upon the table. His trunk had been pulled from the closet, and its contents dumped upon the floor. The bedding had been torn from the bed and the mattress had been cut open. The rugs were rolled up in a corner. While he had been enjoying the fascinating charms of his Wonder Girl some one had thoroughly searched his room.

CHAPTER THREE

FRANK STAFFORD'S amazement dissolved into anger that speedily became white-lipped determination. He could not wait for the elevator in his eagerness to reach the office.

"Say," he blurted out, "you go up and take a look at my room. "It's wrecked! Just all tore to pieces while I was at lunch!"

After the oil-pouring inspection by the manager, Stafford went downstairs to wait for his room to be cleared. He had just stepped into the lobby when a tall, pleasant-faced man with piercing eyes and heavy brows accosted him.

"Mr. Stafford?"

The young man nodded.

"My name's Remley," introduced the stranger and extended his long hand. "I would like to have a talk with you."

Stafford raised his eyes inquiringly. The other smiled a peculiar smile and fingered out the lapel of his coat, disclosing a shiny badge.

"I'm a Federal officer," he explained easily, and Stafford began to warm to his friendly manner. "If you will give me a moment——"

"We'll find a corner in the smoking-room," suggested Stafford. "My room isn't presentable just now."

"No, Mr. Stafford," began Remley in his comradely manner, "we must have this straight. You are in a mighty tight hole."

"Huh!" The young man sat up straight. "Me in a hole?" Then he thought of the stolen machine with the money in the cushion. "Well, maybe I am in hot water, but I don't see how you could know anything about it."

"I believe that you are innocent of any intentional wrong-doing. Still appearances are against you."

"Say, what the devil are you driving at?"

"You visited Tia Juana yesterday and drove home last night?"

"Yes—but——"

"You had a passenger?"

Stafford repressed an angry retort and nodded.

"What become of her?"

Stafford became himself at last. He met the other's stern frown with a bantering grin.

"You're getting too deep for me. Either tell me what it's all about, or I'll have to see an attorney before I talk."

"I'm not accusing you, Stafford—I'm after information. You've heard of the Jarnette Colonization scheme?"

"The papers have been full of that rotten deal. I understand there is a Senate committee here investigating it."

"That's true. Well, the inside of the deal is that the Mexican land belongs to a ring of capitalists here in Los Angeles. Jarnette is the big agent who is arranging the deal with the Asiatic company."

"But it won't go through," stated Stafford confidently. "California won't stand for it."

"However, it has gone through. The papers have been signed by the other side, and a substantial payment has been made. The agreement is now in Los Angeles for final signing by the sellers."

"I wish that Senate bunch knew about that—they'd——"

"We waste time. I want to know about your passenger from Tia Juana."

"I don't see——"

"But I do." Remley became very stern. "She carried that agreement across the line. She is Menna Jarnette, that crooked agent's daughter."

Stafford started an explosive protest, but Remley shook his head with a commiserating smile.

"She's a most fascinating young woman—you're not the first man who has been taken in by her. Well, I've explained my interest in the matter—now tell me where she can be found."

"I can't help you at all. We parted this morning as soon as we reached the city."

"But you saw her again this afternoon. She came up here and you had lunch together."

"Yes, she came to ask if I had found her purse—she left it in my car."

"And had you found it?" Remley smiled cynically.

"No; the car was stolen five minutes after we reached Los Angeles this morning."

"Stolen!" Remley frowned, then his eyes lighted. "What did Miss Jarnette say when you told her that?"

"Why, she was all broke up—her loss must have been considerabl."

There was a strange glint in the officer's eyes.

"And you don't know where she went. She left no address to which you were to send the purse?"

"No, she said she would call in a day or two."

The apologetic manager entered the smoking-room and hurried to Stafford.

"Your room is ready, Mr. Stafford. We have reported the outrage to the police. I assure you that you will not be annoyed again."

Remley parted from Stafford with the promise that he would call in the morning. Hardly had he gone when Morgan, the Casskaden Agency man, came in. His big face wore a confident smile.

"Got your car, Stafford. Found it two blocks from where you lost it."

"Great!" For a moment Stafford was hopeful. "Where is it?"

"Right down in front. I brought it along. Guess it isn't hurt much. There's a tear in the cushion——"

Stafford groaned aloud. He had been a fool to hope that the money had not been found. Of course, that was the reason the car had been stolen.

He followed Morgan down to the curb. For a moment he peered into his machine, then he leaned forward and stared. Near the top of the back cushion on the passenger side there was a wide slit. Stafford's probing hand found a void from which the padding had been removed. He sprang to the other side and jerked out the seat cushion. His fingers dug into the slit. With a shout he pulled out Chet Mason's roll of currency.

CHAPTER FOUR

STAFFORD'S relief at the recovery of the hidden money was tempered by the mystery connected with its continued presence in the machine. If the money had not been the object of the theft of the car, why had the machine been taken?

But his speculation was cut short by an explosion from Morgan.

"So that's why you were worried! Money in the cushion! Say, but you are a lucky bird!"

Stafford admitted all that, gave the detective a substantial reward and drove the car around to the hotel garage. Then he proceeded to examine the tear in the back cushion.

At once he determined that it was not a tear. The four-inch horizontal slit had plainly been cut with a knife. Stafford poked his hand through the hole into the cavity that had been formed by removing the padding and cutting through the burlap that covered the springs.

His fingers encountered a piece of paper that was caught in a spring. With hopeful eagerness he drew it out and examined it carefully. But it was only a torn piece of brown wrapping paper, and with a snort he threw it away.

When Stafford left the garage he had lost all the joy occasioned by the recovery of Mason's money. For, by weaving what he knew in with the story Remley had told him, he made out a very black case against the girl he had befriended.

Of course she was Jarnette's daughter and the messenger of the traitorous schemers. To her had been assigned the duty of carrying the papers from the Oriental colonists waiting in Mexico to the smug villains in Los Angeles. And how cleverly she had managed it! Fearful that she would be suspected and searched at the border, she had hidden the papers in his car and had then become a passenger. No wonder that she had wanted him to keep the car in sight while in San Diego.

Yes, it was very plain. Miss Jarnette had played him from the first. It had been easy. And in the end all she had had to do was to drive the machine two blocks to where it was found and remove the important document from the cushion.

Then Stafford stopped dead. But why had she come back with the yarn about the lost purse?

He was still puzzling over that problem when he reached the hotel. He placed the money in the hotel safe, and went to his room. His restlessness soon drove him outside.

As he walked down the street he argued himself into an easier frame of mind. For some reason Miss Jarnette had wished to square herself with him—to remove suspicion of her from his mind. From her viewpoint it was not so serious, for, of course, she knew nothing of the money hidden in the seat. Why had she come back? Stafford almost whistled. Was it possible that Miss Jarnette had been touched by a breath of the same fire that had burned himself into a new being?

His whistling slipped easily into the humming of a love tune. His head went back, and he stepped out briskly.

Then a bar crashed under his chin. He was jerked backward and vise-like hands gripped his feet and legs. He was carried quickly off the street.

In the darkness back of a billboard Stafford recovered from the surprise of the attack sufficiently to realize that he was surrounded by several men and that a greasy rag had been poked into his mouth.

Firm, deft fingers searched Stafford's clothing. There was a grunting curse as the search came to an end. Then another man came up from the street.

"He had it put in the hotel safe," growled the newcomer. "I saw him."

The announcement was greeted by curses in a language that Stafford could not understand. A low-voiced conference followed.

Shortly a decision was reached. Stafford found himself rendered helpless by rope bonds that were much too tight. He was carried back into a bunch of weeds beside an alley fence and dumped upon the ground. He heard a distant clock striking twelve as his assailants slipped away.

Stafford did not try to figure out a reason for this last development. He was getting too deep in this pool of mystery to bother with guessing. For an hour, as indicated by the booming clock, he tried to get a hand loose. Finding that his efforts only tightened the ropes, he gave it up and tried to chew the dirty rag in two. For hours he lay and shivered and listened for the strokes of the clock.

The cold, miserable night ended at last. A man

cutting across the vacant lot on his way to work discovered Stafford and released him.

Sore and mad, he hurried to the hotel. A bath and clean clothes and breakfast, and then——

There was a crowd in front of the Westgate. A big police machine stood at the curb and a uniformed officer lounged in the doorway.

Stafford's first inquiry brought staggering information.

"Big hold-up!" exclaimed the small boy eagerly. "Couple uh fellers held up th' clerk an' cleaned out th' safe!"

CHAPTER FIVE

STAFFORD was at breakfast in the Westgate café, with the morning paper account of the robbery before him, when a bellboy brought a note. The young man almost jumped when he read:

"I must see you at once. I have a car outside."

The note was unsigned, but it required no signature. Stafford left the table at once and went out. On the sidewalk he paused and looked about. The only car in sight was an enormous green limousine standing across the street. But as he stared at it the door of the big car opened and a white-gloved hand beckoned him.

She was a new Wonder Girl, and Stafford blinked with surprised admiration. Dressed in white fluffiness, her dazzling smile emphasized by a gorgeous hat, she was far removed from the girl of the lonely night ride.

"Good-morning, Mr. Stafford. I'm an early caller, but——" She broke off and nodded invitingly. "Please come in. There is something I must say to you."

Stafford's mind was in a whirl. He looked at her bright, eager face in which a strange anxiety was but partly concealed. She was Menna Jarnette, the daughter of a notorious profiteer in patriotism, and herself his clever aid. But—even so—Stafford looked away and gulped.

"Just a moment," he stammered. "I seem to be mixed in a queer deal, but I want to be square with you. Maybe then you'll be square with me, and—well"—he took a fresh grip on himself—"I know that your name is Menna Jarnette and that you brought some papers from Mexico for your father."

The girl started, and the smile faded from her face. A hard, strained expression took its place. Her eyes narrowed as she leaned forward.

"Well—go on! I made a cat's-paw of you—is that it?"

Stafford raised a protesting hand.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you for that. It was your job and you used your wits. What I'd like—well—you see, I'm all American—and—I don't like the thing you're doing."

The girl bit her lip and frowned.

"I'm not so clever," she said, a peculiar hardness in her voice. "I'm almost ready to say that you have me beaten forty ways. And that's what I wanted to see you about!" Her eyes bored into him. "Of course I had papers hidden in that cushion! What I want to know is where they went."

"What!" Stafford stared. "You mean you didn't get them?"

"I did not. But I'm not yet sure that you didn't."

"Well, I didn't." Stafford was getting on easier ground. "The car was stolen. I was anxious to get it back because I had a large sum of money hidden in the seat cushion."

"You recovered that?"

"I did. But last night the hotel safe was robbed and I lost it again."

There was something of relief in her manner.

"They were after the same papers," explained Stafford, "and that wasn't the first time. My room was wrecked while we were at lunch yesterday, and last night I was waylaid. No—I haven't got your papers, and the government hasn't, for one of their men was after me——"

"A government man after you?" She showed plainly her surprise and alarm.

"Yes—a man named Remley. He seemed very anxious to find out where you were."

All at once the girl laughed with much of her old carefree ripple.

"It's a good thing you weren't able to tell him—oh"—there was a roguish twinkle in her eye—"I didn't mean that." She placed her hand confidingly upon his arm. "You wouldn't betray me, would you?"

"No, I'd fight for you, but I can't say the same for those papers you carried. I'm not in sympathy with what you're doing."

"It's a mystery who's got that package," she mused. "Evidently some one still thinks you have it, but I don't—now. Yes, I was responsible for searching your room. I telephoned to—to a friend—then kept you busy at lunch. I—I'm sorry now. Won't you forgive me? I had nothing to do with the attack on you last night, but——"

A long roadster slipped past the limousine. Stafford recognized Remley as one of the occupants.

"You better go!" he exclaimed. "That was the government man I told you about."

For a moment she stared silently after the roadster, which was stopping farther up the street. At last she nodded. "Perhaps I should keep away from him," she said as Stafford stepped out.

She gave a direction to the driver, and the big machine shot forward.

CHAPTER SIX

ONE big question filled Stafford's mind. If Miss Jarnette did not have the colonization agreement, a paper which other parties were

making desperate efforts to obtain, where was it? His fascinating passenger had hidden the paper in his car, but she had not recovered it. Some one had watched her hide it, had followed to Los Angeles and had stolen the car to get possession of the agreement. But why the efforts of both sides to find the missing evidence? Some one surely had it. He decided to have another look at his machine in the hope that he might still find a clue.

But at the garage he received further evidence of the fact that the paper was still missing. His little car had been systematically overhauled. He obtained a little light from the man in charge.

"Big guy with a government badge brought a couple of mechanics. Said there was stolen diamonds or something hid in it. I don't reckon they found anything."

Stafford almost swore as he surveyed the remains of his roadster. The upholstery had been cut off, the top was in shreds, and every possible hiding place in the body had been opened to view.

Stafford was about to turn away when he remembered the piece of wrapping paper that he had taken from the cushion. After considerable searching through the debris, he found it.

However, a careful examination of the paper revealed nothing to indicate its connection with the missing agreement. It was triangular in shape, evidently a corner torn from a larger piece by being caught in the spring. It might have been there since the cushion was made.

Stafford returned to his room. There was a telegram from Mason, which he read with a groan of misery.

"I'm in San Diego," it read. "All sobered up. Send a thousand."

With a sudden determination, Stafford hunted up the telephone number of Tom Logan, the Casskaden detective. The conversation resulted in Logan calling at Stafford's room.

"I don't know just what I want," remarked Stafford after he had told all he knew of the mystery. "But maybe if we get at the bottom of this we can recover the money stolen from the safe. Of course, the hotel is responsible, but they have no insurance, and I understand I would have to sue them."

Logan nodded. "Find the missing paper, I'd say, and then do business with whoever got the money."

"No!" Stafford was emphatic. "If I get that evidence, there's just one thing I'll do with it."

"Better go slow with that girl," cautioned Logan. "Jarnette may get away with this dirty scheme, but the government will get him yet."

To keep from defending the girl, Stafford produced his single clue—the torn piece of wrapping paper.

"I found this in the hole in the cushion," he said. "I can't see that it amounts to anything."

Logan took the piece of paper, smoothed it with his fingers and raised it close to his eyes. Suddenly he sniffed and pressed the paper to his nose.

"Huh!" A grin shot across the detective's face. He rose quickly and reached for his hat. "Don't amount to anything—huh? Well, I'm betting that it leads straight to the party that took that paper."

In just an hour Logan returned. With him was an undersized, pasty-faced man with ratlike eyes and twitching movements.

"Found him easy," stated Logan jubilantly. "No, it wasn't magic." He pushed the little man into a seat. "This is Joe Mathews—of Tia Juana and Los Angeles."

Stafford maintained a hopeful silence while Logan lighted a cigarette. Finally the detective said:

"When I smelled that paper I saw the whole thing. You see, it smelled of opium—and I knew that a certain underground operator had received a shipment of opium yesterday."

"Opium!" Stafford was disappointed. "Then it was opium smuggling—there was no colonization agreement?"

"Tell him about it, Joe," ordered the detective.

"Now—I dunno." The little man leered at Logan. "I gotta know how I'm comin' out in this."

"He wants to bargain," explained Logan. "You see, he'll get a bad jolt if we turn him in. The idea is, will you let him go if you get that document?"

Stafford did not hesitate. "Yes—how did he get it?"

The opium smuggler grinned comfortably.

"I hadda load of the stuff an' I knew I couldn't cart it across myself. I was lookin' for a chance to hide it in a car goin' to San Diego, when I seen a dame slip somethin' in th' cushion of a car. Soon as she stepped away I made th' switch—an' her watchin' all th' time."

"Then you have the package she put in the cushion—where is it?"

Mathews's little eyss flickered cunningly.

"Sure I got it—but I ain't takin' no chances."

"Oh, I have no interest in your smuggling operations," snapped Stafford. "I want that package."

"All right!" Mathews jumped up. "I'll get it."

"Don't be in a hurry!" warned Logan. "I'm going with you."

They went out together. In twenty minutes Logan returned and laid a large envelope on Stafford's table. His face was grave.

"You'd better get rid of this quick! There's a couple of Secret Service men hanging out down below, and I saw Jarnette himself not very far away. And say—if you're figuring on slipping this back to that girl you're too late—Menna Jarnette was arrested an hour ago!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

STAFFORD was sitting in his room two hours after Logan left when his telephone rang.

"Oh, Mr. Stafford," came a voice that he recognized in spite of its excited flutter. "Can—will you come to see me right away?"

Although he was not in the habit of calling on people in the county jail, Stafford was game.

"Of course—I——"

"Oh, I knew you would! I was so sure you'd come that I sent my car—it's outside your hotel by this time. Come right away, please!"

Stafford ran down. Just outside the hotel he bumped into a short, heavy-set man, who grunted and then called out:

"Hey! Wait a minute!"

But Stafford was half-way down the steps. As he sprang into the big machine he saw the man he had bumped running toward him, and two others dashing toward a taxi across the street.

"I'll bet that was Remley," he muttered. "Well, I can't be any deeper in it."

To Stafford's surprise, the chauffeur did not go downtown. Instead, he turned south on Figueroa street, then west on Adams. Finally he turned in through a gate, purred up a wide drive and stopped before an enormous bungalow.

The driver led Stafford through a court-like hall to a room with many French doors. His Wonder Girl hurried forward.

"I'm so glad you come, Mr. Stafford."

"Why, I—I heard that you had been arrested, Miss Jarnette. I—I'm all befuddled."

She laughed with a queer, metallic ring. "And I heard that you had recovered my paper from the dope smuggler who took it from your car. It is mine, Mr. Stafford—I must have it."

Stafford could feel the hard change in her voice. He could only stare. And as he stared he felt a draft upon his neck. He turned slowly to face the smiling Remley.

"Oh!" The girl stiffled a scream, but the newcomer raised a silencing hand, which seemed also to be a signal, for two men stepped through the French doors into the room.

"It seems I'm just in time." Remley addressed both Stafford and the startled girl. "I understand the missing document has been found. It will be to your advantage, Stafford, to turn it in at once."

"No!" exclaimed the girl sharply. "You must not!"

"Shut her up!" snapped Remley to one of his men.

But Stafford sprang in front of her.

"None of that!" he cautioned. "Your evidence is all safe enough, but you're not going to trouble this girl."

"Oh, I'm not after her—I want that agreement."

Then Stafford smiled. "Everything's easy then," he said. "Let her go—promise she will not be prosecuted—and you get the paper."

He thought that Remley hesitated with a puzzled glance at the girl. However, she had something to say to that offer.

"You shall not!" Her voice was hard as steel.

Stafford looked at her and his eyes met her searching gaze. And with that steady crutiny her manner changed. She turned her head slowly, and when her eyes came back to Stafford she was smiling.

"It's bargain!" snapped Remley, still studying the girl. "Give me the paper and she can go."

"Give her an hour's start," insisted Stafford. "Go"—turning to the girl—"take your car—and——"

But she shook her head, smiling.

"Come!" urged Remley. "Come through with that paper."

"I have your promise that she will not be prosecuted?"

"Yes." Remley frowned again at the smiling subject of the bargaining. "Give me the paper."

"The agreement is safe," said Stafford quietly. "I sent it to Senator Ware of that investigating committee."

Here was a bombshell.

Every one was intensely startled.

They gazed at each other in utter amazement.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Remley.

The girl looked stunned.

The slim young man in charge smiled faintly. He did not seem to be at all affected.

"So Ware has it," Remley muttered.

Stafford seemed to enjoy the situation.

He gazed from one to the other coolly, quietly, then swung around facing the door.

He heard a gasp from the girl and saw a startled expression shoot across Remley's face. And in the next instant the room was full of men, who stepped softly and carried ugly-looking automatics carelessly in their hands.

"He's right," boomed the voice of the slim young man in charge. "Senator Ware just telephoned us that he had the evidence, and to pick up the gang as fast as we could."

Stafford made for the officer.

"Just a minute," he blurted out. "I've made a bargain——"

He felt a pressure on his arm.

"Don't," came a whispered warning. "Don't tell about that."

Then the room began to dance, for handcuffs appeared suddenly upon the wrists of Remley and his two companions, and the girl was giving orders to the slim young man. Then she slipped up to Stafford.

"I—I'm sorry—I—but your Mr. Remley is Jarnette."

"Jarnette! But you——"

"Oh, I'm just Senator Ware's secretary, and incidentally his niece. You see—he sent me into Mexico to investigate, and I stole that agreement from Menna Jarnette."

The Kid

By CARROLL JOHN DALY

THE Kid dropped into the Tenderloin with a suddenness that surprised that august community. Within thirty-six hours there wasn't a bartender on the Avenue who didn't know the Kid's history. He had come from the West with his father, James Plant, the cattle-king; slickest business man this side of the Rockies. No man but one had ever put anything over on him and that one was James Plant, Jr., the Kid.

Chester Robinson, for the last ten years a block and a half ahead of the police, increased his lead chasing the Kid. But the Kid played no favorites. He jumped saloons so fast that Chester gave up the chase and tried the waiting game in Clancy's back room. A few words with Clancy and Chester who had the eye of every detective in the city upon him—but never the hand—was playing possum and working his think box under a stylish derby, the crowning glory of his immaculate attire.

About two o'clock the Kid blew in.

"Nothing doing," said Clancy. "You've had enough."

"Clancy, this gentleman is a friend of mine," and Chester winked the eye of good-fellowship towards the Kid.

"Right," returned the Kid, appreciating the friendly hand held out to help the thirsty.

Two hours later Chester knew he had drawn a blank. The Kid's wealth was momentary. The expected well-lined pocketbook never housed more than a fifty. His slickness in doing the "famed" James Plant lay in lying, cheating and the accomplishment of petty thefts from a careless father.

All this the Kid slobbered out with a pride and boastfulness that sickened Chester. Chester had counted on the money; a thousand dollars at least. His plans were laid; the "Countess" was waiting. Yes, the laugh was on him. Robinson, the fanciest confidence man in the State, had wasted two days for the chance of taking $8.75 in a friendly game. The others had passed up the Kid but he—well, he was sold.

"Great father, mine," the Kid hiccoughed as they were parting. "Can do anything—got into trouble once in Chicago—dad fixed the police—cost a pile, but he fixed 'em."

"Police—fixed 'em," the words stuck in Chester's head. He held the Kid's hand a moment. The sulky goodnight died in his throat. His former good humor returned. Then, pronouncing the Kid the best little sport in the city, he turned and taking the Kid firmly by the arm emphasized a sudden decision to see him to his hotel.

For a week Chester and the Kid kept company. It was Chester's money that filled up the champagne goblets, over which dark-eyed little nymphs smiled upon James Plant, Jr.

One afternoon, in Chester's rooms, the Kid explained the money shortage.

"It's this way," he said. "Some one wrote the governor a nasty letter—about my drinking and that sort of rot. He won't give me money for clothes; won't fall for any of the lies I use to tell him; don't carry a roll about—so there is no chance to peal off a fifty. Why, Ches!" he paused, then blurted out in anger. "The old boy's so mean that he counts his money overnight just as if I were a crook."

"Tough," agreed Chester.

"Yep. He'll be sorry for it, though. Now if I robbed some one, by Jove, I bet that would fetch him around." Banging the table, he arose and passed up and down the room.

"Oh, come now." Chester flicked an ash carelessly on the floor, then, as the Kid filled a glass and tossed off a drink, added with seeming indifference, "You wouldn't have the nerve?"

"Wouldn't, eh?" The Kid turned and faced him scornfully, then diving his hand into his pocket he produced two fifty-dollar bills. "Now what do you think of that?" he questioned. "Had five of them. Spent the rest for a vanity case; a present for Daisy Colburn, the quiet little girl you introduced me to."

"Where did you get that money?" Chester tried not to show his agitation.

"Hocked the old man's pin." There was no shame in boy's face—rather pride.

Chester was thoroughly startled. This theft might spoil his plans. He must hurry his "little game" along. If he had known the Kid's true nature earlier.

The Kid interrupted his thoughts.

"Well, don't you like it?" His voice was defiant, he had noticed the older man's agitation.

"There, there." Chester recovered his habitual calm. "It will be your money some day. Your father has certainly treated you shabbily. You're a man now, Jimmie. You just got to have money."

"That's it," the Kid nodded his head "Take Daisy, for instance. She noticed I didn't have any money."

"Ah, she told you that?" Chester was interested.

"No, she didn't. She seemed a little different from the others. I thought she wanted to hint about some little present."

"And she didn't."

"No, I think she started to, but she stopped,

said 'Money don't mean everything,' or some such thing. But I must be running along." The Kid looked at his watch. "Must dress for that supper to-night."

"Daisy will be there." Chester stroked his chin reflectively. "She's a peach, Jimmie; I envy you."

"Don't need to," laughed the Kid. "Think of my going home and explaining to my dear old father just how I lost his pin," and with a final burst of merriment he was gone.

Alone in his room, Chester hurried to the telephone.

Hardly audible beyond the mouthpiece came his whispered voice. "To-night, Countess. At the Astoria. No, I'm afraid to wait longer. You must force Daisy to play her part better. I don't think so, still you must speak to her. She is? That's good. No, they are still looking for you in Chicago. Right-o; good-by."

Hanging up the receiver, Chester seated himself in an easy-chair and with the company of a good cigar thought out the evening's campaign.

Robinson's supper party was a success so far as the Kid was concerned. Daisy Colburn sat at his right. Her quiet reserved manner was gone; her conversation light and flippant. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes blazed with memories as she spoke of yachting trips; the opera; gay dinners and the summer evenings spent along the boulevards of Paris.

She examined the little vanity case with pleased surprise and let him hold her hand beneath the table. Her hand was cold; icy cold, thought the Kid. There was no friendly response to his flirtive squeeze and he looked up with surprise, vexation and a coaxing appeal. The girl's face had become white; her fingers closed convulsively about his. She turned her face towards him and smiled; a smile formed with terror and with fear.

Across the table the Kid felt that Chester was scowling at her A furtive glance in that direction found Chester smiling upon them and shaking his finger in good-natured warning.

"Oh, Jim," said Daisy. Her voice trembled, but there was real feeling in her words.

"Jim," said Chester, as the supper broke up. "You take care of Miss Colburn for a while, her aunt will call for her later. For my part, I've got to run along. Don't forget we lunch together to-morrow." And as he shook the Kid's hand in parting, he whispered: "Lucky dog, I believe you've made her."

Left alone with the Kid, Daisy refused all his invitations to while away the time in some nearby cabaret.

"I don't—much—feel like going about to-night," she told him. "Let us find a quiet little spot and you can tell me something about yourself, something about your life in the West. I don't want to talk. I'll just listen to you, Jim. Perhaps that will take me away from my own thoughts. But here is a nice spot——" she broke off and taking the Kid by the hand led him to a secluded and dimly lit alcove adjoining the long corridor.

The Kid never knew just how it came about. He liked to talk, yet Daisy did most of the talking. She cried a little, leaned her pretty dark head upon his shoulder and hinted at a dark and terrible shadow which hung over her life. She needed money. $500.00 at once. Why, she would steal to raise that money, but she didn't have the nerve.

"Look!" She sat up suddenly and pointed to a rather stout lady who slumbered peacefully in one of the easy-chairs. "Do you see that necklace? How easy it would be to take it! Yet I can't," She leaned again upon his shoulder and sobbed hysterically.

"Is it as bad as that, Daisy?" he placed his arm about her.

"So bad that I would give my life, my very soul"—she paused, reached up and clasped his hand—"to him who would help me, now."

"You would keep that promise?" The Kid stood up.

"Yes," her voice was hardly audible. She leaned forward, her head buried in her hands.

She felt that the Kid had left her. An interval of silence. Then his hand touched her upon the shoulder.

"You shall have the money to-morrow," he whispered.

Daisy jumped to her feet. In a glance she took in the Kid's features. His face was white, his left hand trembled as it lay upon her shoulder, his right hand was dug deep into the pocket of his dinner coat. Her eyes sought and rested upon the back of the sleeping lady. The white pearl necklace that had adorned her neck was gone. She turned and faced the Kid.

"Will you kiss me, Daisy?" The Kid looked straight into her eyes, down into the depths of shining frightened orbs.

The girl held up her lips, then quickly drew back.

"What will you ask of me when—when you give me that money?" She spoke without lowering her head.

"I'll ask you to let me help you in your trouble." There was an earnestness in his voice not to be mistaken.

"Is that all?" Her voice was low.

"That is all." His eyes never felt hers.

They stood so a moment; looking each into the other's eyes.

"Will you kiss me, Daisy?"

The girl swayed toward him, then with a frightened sigh she flung her arms across her face. "No! No.!" she cried and turning sped down the long hallway.

"By Jove," exclaimed the Kid, and glancing hastily at the bare-necked lady made his way towards the bar.

"Why, Jim, what's this? Sit down. Compose

yourself, my boy," said Chester as the Kid, half hysterical with fright, burst into his rooms the following morning.

The Kid told Chester all. "It's been terrible," he concluded. "Didn't sleep a wink all night—and this morning I felt sure some one was watching me. What's that?"

"Just the elevator," Chester explained as he poured out a stiff drink and thrust it between the Kid's twitching fingers.

"A pearl necklace, eh," said Chester when the Kid was somewhat calmer. Then diving into his pocket he brought forth a newspaper clipping. "Well, you're not so worse off," he laughed as he tossed the paper upon the Kid's knees. "Read that. Cut it from the paper this morning after you called me up."

The Kid smoothed out the crumpled paper and read:

$1,000 REWARD

For return of pearl necklace. Lost—Astoria Hotel; Friday evening. NO QUESTIONS asked. Apartment 4. C. ——— W. 74th St., City.

"Not much to that, Kid. Just take it over and get the money. You never stole it. You just found it." Chester crossed to the boy and talked; lifted him from his depression and made him as eager to receive the money as Chester was to see him get it.

"Now for it," he told the Kid an hour later, and as the boy prepared to depart Chester added: "If there should be trouble—not that there will be—call me up. I'm your friend, Jim. I'll wait here till I hear from you. Remember just how you are to act."

The door closed. The Kid was gone.

"Come in, come in. Mrs. DeVoe will be pleased to see you. You have the necklace? That's good, that's good. Mrs. DeVoe, this young man has come in answer to your advertisement."

Ill at ease, the Kid followed a dark-haired, round-shouldered little man who, constantly rubbing his hands, led him to the presence of a portly woman.

The woman arose and stood by the table as the Kid approached. "You have brought the necklace? Give it to me." She smilingly extended her hand.

"How about the money?" The Kid drew the necklace from his pocket and held it in his hand. It was with an attempt of lazy indifference that he let the beads slip through his fingers ignoring the woman's outstretched hand.

"You shall have the money. The necklace is worth ten times the amount of the reward. Perhaps you didn't know that?"

"Come, come," the little figure turned from the window as the Kid still demurred. "Mrs. DeVoe's honor is beyond question."

It was with some reluctance that the Kid allowed the necklace to be taken from him and his eyes followed the woman to the window where she and the man bent their heads together over the beads.

"Where did you get this necklace?" the woman turned sharply and tossed the beads upon the table.

"No questions. Remember." The Kid tried to smile.

"You stole my necklace." Mrs. DeVoe lifted an accusing finger.

"I didn't," returned the Kid with sulky defiance.

"Where is my necklace?" the woman screamed, rushing toward the Kid. The little man stepped between them and taking the woman by the arm led her to the coach.

"Why, you've got your old necklace." The Kid's voice carried a surprise somewhat akin to fear.

"That's too thin." The little man leaned across the table. "Entirely too thin, sir." Then as if suddenly enlightened he produced a roll of bills. "Perhaps you doubt our good faith in this matter. Now, sir, produce the real necklace," and he began to count the money.

"The real necklace?" the Kid stood aghast.

"To be sure," the little man smiled. "That"—he indicated with a jerk of his thumb the beads which lay upon the table—"that," he repeated, "is paste."

"But that," gasped the Kid, "is the one I took."

"Took— a good word, to be sure. Don't play the fool. We know you stole the necklace, yet Mrs. DeVoe has no desire to punish—stop! If you walk out of that door the matter goes into the hands of the police."

"The police! Out there!" The Kid turned from the doorway. His voice trembled as he asked: "What shall I do?"

The smile receded from the little man's face; his lips curled into a sneer as, leaning close to Kid, he leered: "Produce the necklace or—" He paused.

"I——" The Kid stopped. Tried to think. He saw that further denial was useless. These people would not believe. Then he thought of Chester. "May I telephone?" he finally spoke.

"I'm in an awful hole," he told Chester. "Yes, you had best get in touch with my father."

"My father's coming." He hung up the receiver and laid his head upon the table.

So the trio waited in silence.

Came a sudden ring of the doorbell. The Kid started to his feet. Mrs. DeVoe, too, arose, looked fixedly at the boy's white frightened face.

"If you would rather not face your father just now you can wait in that room," she indicated and open doorway. "When the time comes, tell your father the truth," she went on, not unkindly, as the boy, nodding his thanks, entered the aperture and closed the door behind him.

"Well?" Mrs. DeVoe addressed her little spokesman.

"Very well, very well indeed." He rubbed his hands together. "The dear boy will confess. The father will pay. Chester will see to that."

"But, Daisy, she didn't come last night."

"There will be no need of Daisy, my dear Countess. Don't trouble your pretty head about Daisy. She acted well, you say?"

The woman nodded her head.

"That's enough. Quite enough," the little man went on, rubbing his hands. "She's young; perhaps frightened—she'll be back. But our visitor's arrived." The little man crossed the room in answer to a loud knocking and admitted Chester and a tall, stalwart man of fifty.

Chester's companion came right to business. Listened to the story of the necklace and Mrs. DeVoe's sobbing desire to spare the boy if the original beads were returned—or their value.

"There seems to be no doubt that the boy's gone bad," said the stranger, when Chester had verified the several statements. "You say you think he has given the original to some girl." And when Chester nodded: "Still he's my son, and I'll see him through. Call the boy out."

Mrs. DeVoe opened the door and called softly: "Your father wishes to see you," and as the Kid entered, she whispered, "tell him the truth, he is going to help you."

The Kid raised his head and followed the woman's eyes to the face of the stranger. "That's not my father," he cried, stepping back at the same time. His hand seemed to unconsciously fly forward and strike the tiny ivory pistol from the woman's grasp. With a cry like that of some animal, the woman turned, and striking the Kid across the mouth, rushed into the room beyond.

Chester and the little man stood paralyzed with surprise, allowing the two plainclothes men who rushed into the room to place them in irons.

"Did the woman get away, chief?" asked one of the men.

"I think not," laughed the stranger. "She has been sitting on the fire-escape for some time. Well, well, Countess; so you decided not to leave us"; and Mrs. DeVoe was half dragged and half led into the room by the red-faced policeman.

"She fought like a wildcat," said the young Irishman, rubbing a bruised eye as he lined the woman up beside the two men.

"What is the reason of the outrage?" the woman asked, her voice trembling with anger.

"No reason for excitement," said the chief. "I'm a stranger to you and perhaps to our dear friend, Chester. But the ferrit. Well, Mr. Anderson or Hill or whatever your name is now, surely you remember me," as he bent his face close to that of the little man. "Try to think," he said. "I had no beard then, my hair was gray; something like this." The chief raised his hand and removed the gray wig.

The little man peered long and earnestly into his face. "Detective Hammond, of Chicago," he muttered.

"Chief-inspector, now," smiled Hammond. "Ten years makes a difference. As for the Countess," as he looked at the woman the smile left his face, "we want her for murder back in Illinois. An atrocious crime. I don't think Chester had a hand in it. Still, he's in bad company, and there must be a hundred charges against him; this one of blackmail should do for the present. Yes, my friends, the game is up. I was with Mr. Plant when your message came, and he let me handle the situation for him.

"Now then," he turned to the Kid as the others stood silent, "I only see three where there should be four. Where is the girl?"

"What girl?" The Kid raised his head.

"Why, the young woman who got you to steal the necklace. That's the way it was worked, wasn't it?"

"I don't understand," said the Kid. "You've got me out of a hole, although, after all, it don't seem that I did anything wrong. They are all crooks, I guess."

"Enough, young man. Your actions show me that no incentive was needed to make you steal. I hope, in the future, your father sees the folly of your ways and keeps you back on the ranch where you belong."

"Well, I can't make a girl where there ain't one," said the Kid, sulkily, and as the chief looked away he winked at Chester, who smiled back in appreciation.

"Come," said the chief. "Remove these people. As for you," he took the Kid by the arm, "I'm to take you to your father."

When the trio were safely dispatched, the chief turned to the Kid, and said: "Put it there," as he extended a ham-like hand. "Jim, you are the best detective on the force. I've wanted that woman for five years. You have kept your secret, too; not one of them suspects you more than a dissipated kid." He consulted his watch. "Well, we'll have a bite of lunch. It's been a hard morning."

"Sorry, chief," smiled the Kid, "but I have an important engagement. There's a taxi." And leaving the bewildered man standing alone upon the sidewalk, the Kid dashed through the traffic and, swinging into a passing cab, was lost to view in the mass of vehicles.

"Damn!" said the chief. "I wanted to ask him about that girl."

In the seclusion of the machine the Kid spelt out the dancing letters of a little pink note:

Throw away the necklace, Jim. I lied to you. If you really care to see me again, I will be in Brown's little restaurant on 14th street to-morrow at one o'clock. But, throw away that necklace, Jim. They lied to me about you. Perhaps we can help each other to go straight.—DAISY.

Ten minutes to one. The Kid closed his watch.

The Fingers of Vengeance

By EDWARD P. HENDRICK

MATTEO LAPARDONI was twelve years old when the carbineers came and took his father away. It was part of his heritage to understand why his father had shot Solfani Dori; likewise it was his to know and never to forget that the brothers Vallatto—Dominic and Arturo—had stood as witnesses against his father and denounced him to the authorities. Thus it was that Matteo accepted responsibility as sole surviving male of the house of Lapardoni. The blood sang in his ears as his father, standing manacled between two soldiers, flashed upon him a glance of command and spat out the words "Remember the Vallatti!"

While other lads played games and flew kites, Matteo brooded upon his father's parting words and planned his vengeance. The heavy rifle was too much for him at first, but he struggled with it daily and soon was able to load it, and by resting it across the big rock behind the cabin, could hit a small target at fifty paces.

Then came weeks of waiting, of spying upon the Valatti as they went about their business along the water-front of Palermo. He must find means to decoy them outside the city to some place where he might lie in wait. This was his problem, and while he studied upon it the weeks became months and a year slipped away.

One day he failed to find the brothers at their usual place of business. The next day they did not appear. Cautious inquiry brought the information that they had left Palermo and gone to Naples.

Matteo ground his teeth and the flame of passion flashed from his black eyes. "Sapristi! To Naples! The cowards!"

The Sicilian boy of fifteen is a man. There was little of boyishness about Matteo Lapardoni as he stood on the deck of a steamer in the harbor of Naples. Two years had brought him nearly to man's size and strength, and the strength of his hate, keeping pace with his physical growth, had become bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. He saw nothing of the glories of the bay of Naples; his eyes were fixed upon the city itself—the city that sheltered the Vallatti.

Six weeks of fruitless search brought Matteo to the end of his resources. The Vallatti were not to be found. He durst not inquire too openly concerning them, but by indirect questioning he at last learned that they had left Naples some time during the previous year. One thought Genoa had been their destination; another had heard they were to go to Florence; still another was sure Bologna was the place where they would be found.

Discouragement is the test of resolve. Matteo met the test and triumphed over it. He found employment with an old engraver and earned a meagre living by polishing metals, sharpening tools, and doing other work of a humble kind. The young man was skillful with his hands, and perceiving this, his employer taught him something of the art of engraving upon metals and allowed him to do certain of the more simple work.

Realizing that if he was to carry on an extensive search for the Vallatti he must have funds, Matteo devoted himself earnestly to the mastery of the engraver's trade and at the end of two years was capable of turning out a creditable piece of work on gold or silver. He had a keen eye that rarely needed a magnifying lens and a sure hand that followed the minutest pattern with precision.

With a set of engraver's tools rolled within a bundle of clothing, he once more set out upon his mission. Rome, Florence, Bologna, Venice; he threaded their streets and alleys, haunted their cafés, watched in their marketplaces. Three years passed and still the Vallatti had successfully eluded him.

Matteo was nearly twenty when he came to Genoa. He worked only enough to earn a bare living; the remainder of the time he searched, and watched, and hated. "Remember the Vallatti!" Those words still hummed in his ears and burned in his brain. Waking or sleeping, working or watching—he remembered the Vallatti.

A great steamship was casting loose from the quay. Matteo stood idly by as the lines were let go and her head swung clear. Passengers on her decks waved frantically to friends on the dock and shots of farewell arose in a hoarse babel. Glancing along the vessel's rail his eyes rested upon the faces of two men—Dominic and Arturo Vallatto. A scant ten yards beyond his reach they were, but as safe from his vengeance at that moment as though in another world. Already the great propellers were churning the water into yellow foam and the ship gathered headway for her long voyage to—to where?

The question seared Matteo's brain like a hot iron. In an instant he was fighting his way through the crowd that choked the approach to the office of the steamship company.

"Bound for New York," said the official shortly. "The next sailing?—Monday."

Five dragging days; and then Matteo Lapardoni in his turn watched the shores of Italy fade in the purple distance astern. For seven barren years had fate played with him; thwarted him;

tortured him. Now the day—his day—seemed at hand.

During his years of search, passion had gradually given place to a patience not less alert; rage had been succeeded by a cunning no less deadly. As he learned more of the world he had come to understand that the primitive methods of vengeance practiced in his own Sicily would not be successful in other localities. What would he find in America? He must study the customs of this new land. A false step might put his revenge forever beyond his reach.

Thus it was that Matteo passed the first few weeks, after landing in New York, in close study of the newspapers printed in his native language. He found lodgings in the heart of the Italian district and divided his time between study and search.

In both he was successful. He learned much of the customs and laws of the country and he located his quarry. The brothers lived in a street not far from his own lodging. He saw them frequently in the streets and stood close to them in the cafés where they mingled with the crowd of their countrymen. A score of times he might have driven a stiletto through the heart of one —possibly both of them. Seven years had so altered his appearance that the Vallatto brothers failed to recognize in this sturdy youth the child of old Guido Lapardoni; condemned to death by their testimony.

But although Matteo held his stiletto always in readiness, he was not to be hurried into rashness. He must have a plan; something worthy of himself; something befitting his cleverness and skill. He was no longer a wild boy of Sicily, he was a craftsman—an artist.

Dominic and Arturo Vallatto shared a room on the third floor of a tenement house. A rusty fire-escape clung to the rear wall of the building and passed within a yard of their window. From the blackness of an alley, Matteo crept up this creaking support and paused within listening distance. The brothers were drinking wine and talking of Palermo. At times they broke forth into one of the boisterous drinking songs that the listener knew so well. For an hour he waited and listened; then the light at the window winked out, a door slammed, a key turned in a lock and he heard the shuffling of footsteps along the hallway outside.

Softly approaching the window, Matteo struck a match and looked in. Directly before him was a table on which stood a metal flask and two glasses. Gently he raised the sash and with a knee upon the windowsill reached for the flask. Taking it very carefully by the top he regained the fire-escape and crept cautiously down into the covering darkness.

Dominic Vallatto was found face downward upon the stairs outside the door of his lodgings. A stiletto had been driven between his shoulders and the point had penetrated the spine, causing instant death. There was no evidence of a struggle. Upon the polished handle of the weapon were prints of a thumb and three fingers—all remarkably clear and perfect.

Arturo Vallatto, brother of the murdered man, had been found at a nearby café and arrested on suspicion. At police headquarters the prisoner's finger prints were taken.

"Not much question about this case," remarked Carter, the department expert, as he studied the marks with a magnifying glass, and compared them with the enlarged photographs of those found on the stiletto. "This thumb mark is identical in every line." He took up the next plate. "This finger is the same; perfect in every way. I guess we've got the right man sure enough, and it'll be the chair for——"

Carter paused suddenly and stared at the plates lying before him. "Devilish queer about this!" he muttered. He studied the finger prints closely for a moment longer, then handed the glass to Riordon, who was detailed with him on the case. "Take a look at those prints and tell me if I'm seeing straight."

Riordon studied the various marks line by line and compared them with the photographs. Then he laid down the glass, and leaned back in his chair with a puzzled frown. "Thumb and first finger O. K., but the other two fingers don't match up—not anywhere near."

Carter nodded. "That's how I see it. Now how in blazes can that be? Did two men have a hand in this business?"

"Can't see how they could have—but it must be they did. It's up to us to find two fingers that go with those prints."

The room formally occupied by the Vallatto brothers had been kept locked following the discovery of the crime. The careful inspection of its contents now made by Carter and Riordon yielded few clues in the way of finger prints. Two faint marks were found upon a candlestick and an imperfect thumb print could be traced upon a drinking glass.

"These prints may have been made by Dominic Vallatto," remarked Riordon. "Before we waste any more time on them let's go down to the morgue and get his finger records."

In their room at headquarters, the two experts went over the intricate markings line by line. Suddenly Carter seized one of the photographs, and placed it beside the recently obtained finger prints of the murdered man.

"Look at this!" he exclaimed. "Here's where those other two finger marks on that stiletto came from!"

Riordon rose hastily from his chair and taking the records compared them carefully. "It's a fact—but it's impossible just the same! Here's the case as we know it. Dominic Vallatto was killed by a stiletto between his shoulders; on the handle of the weapon was found a perfect thumb, and finger-print made by the thumb and first finger of Arturo Vallatto, and—here Riordon picked up the glass and studied the records

for a long minute—"and the equally perfect prints made by two fingers of the murdered man."

"Just so," supplemented Carter, "and Dominic was struck from behind, and could not have had his hand on the knife—moreover, he had just come in from the street and was wearing gloves."

"There's been a big mistake somewhere," said Riordon.

"It's all a mistake," grumbled Carter; "a bunch of bungles—or else the whole theory of finger-print evidence will have to be revised." He bent over the table, and again compared the lines. "And we thought this case was simple!" he growled.

"Dead men tell no tales," observed Riordon.

"They tell lies!" snapped Carter; "anyhow, this one did. If finger-print evidence is worth a cent, then Dominic Vallatto's two fingers and Arturo Vallatto's thumb and finger were on the handle of that knife when it killed Dominic."

"But that's impossible," said Riordon.

"Just so," replied Carter, grimly. "Our evidence isn't worth a damn! No court would consider it. We've got to start all over again."

Dominic Vallatto had been dead ten days, and still the police combed the Italian district for evidence of his slayer. Every possible clue was being followed to its end, and each in succession was found to be worthless. Carter and Riordon joined in the work, although finger-print evidence seemed suddenly to have been eliminated from the case. A house-to-house inquiry brought them, in time, to the lodging of Matteo Lapardoni. The room had been closed for ten days, but as two-weeks' rent had been paid in advance, the owner had made no attempt to enter. At the insistence of the officers a key was produced and the search began. On the floor was a scrap of newspaper giving the date of sailing of the *Albania* for Genoa eight days before.

Carter opened a closet door. "Riordon!" he cried in a voice husky with excitement. "Riordon, for God's sake look here!"

On a shelf in the closet stood a metal flask, and on its polished surface were the markings of a thumb and three fingers.

With a hand that trembled in spite of his years of experience in criminal cases, Carter took the flask from the shelf and carried it to the window. By the aid of a pocket glass he examined the markings.

"The same!" he exclaimed excitedly. "The same marks that were on the handle of that stiletto! I'd know 'em anywhere! I've seen 'em in my dreams ever since! Engraver's work—and beautifully done; every line perfect!"

"That may be," objected Riordon, "but how the devil do you get any connection between this flask and that knife?"

Carter still studied the delicately engraved lines. A minute crumb of red substance attracted his attention. With his knife point he scraped it carefully from the lines and wiped it onto his thumb nail.

"Riordon," he said softly, "there must be more of this red wax somewhere. Let's find it."

It was hidden under the foot of the mattress—a small paper box containing four caps of red wax that looked much like thimbles. On each cap was the impression of delicate lines. Carter slipped the caps upon the thumb and three fingers of his right hand, breathed upon the surface of the flask, and grasped it firmly with his capped fingers. As he set it again upon the table there was left on the polished metal the same clear cut thumb and finger markings as were found on the handle of the stiletto.

"A clever devil!" exclaimed Riordon. "If he hadn't got Dominic's finger-prints mixed with his brother's, no power on earth could have saved Arturo from the chair. The next thing is to locate this engraver."

"Just so," remarked Carter, dryly. "The morning's paper reports that the *Albania* docked at Geona yesterday."

STRANGE MIRAGE ON THE SIDEWALK

A CURIOUS case of sidewalk mirage is described by Prof. F. W. McNair of Michigan College of Mining. Prof. McNair writes:

"I was walking eastward on a cement sidewalk on a street running nearly east and west, and moving up a moderate grade which joins a nearly level stretch of walk. On reaching a point which brought my eye slightly above the level portion, and at which normally the level stretch would have been seen in its entire length, but much foreshortened, I observed instead what appeared to be a stretch of clear dark water covering the entire width of the walk and brilliantly reflecting moving persons and other objects in sight beyond it.

"The sky was clear, the air cool, the sun high. It was about 3 o'clock P. M., local time. There was a moderate breeze. The angle of observation was very small, probably not above three degrees. A step or two either east or west, and the water was gone, but within the proper limits, the illusion was definite and continuing. The Weather Bureau report for the day indicated that approximately thirty feet above the spot where the mirage was observed the air temperature was about 60 degrees F. and the humidity about 63 degrees.

"The resemblance between conditions here described and those which produce the mirage on the plains is obvious."

The One-Night Club

By MARSHALL P. WILDER

THE handsome but somewhat corpulent Mrs. Harvey Lockwood smiled benignly upon her assembled guests, then raising her skirts delicately about her ankles, she stepped carefully up onto a broad divan about in the center of the parlor, and prepared to address them on the burning question of the evening.

"Ladies!"

Mrs. Lockwood pronounced the word "Ladies" with the falling inflection. She had long been President of the Sorosis Club of Sleepytown, so it was natural to her to omit the "and gentleman" from her addresses.

Immediately the five ladies present postponed their voluminous chatter and turned their individual attention upon the speaker. It was plainly to be seen that the question of the evening was one of the deepest import.

"Ladies!" Mrs. Lockwood said again, as if drawing inspiration for what was to follow from the very fact that there was no baneful male influence present, no self-conscious, sneering "lord of creation" to hear and ridicule her remarks, and then, with a trifle more dignity in her manner, in spite of the uncertain springiness of the divan, she plunged at once into the very essence of the troublous matter. "Inasmuch as our husbands, brothers and lovers" (the latter with a sadly sympathetic glance in the direction of Miss Summers) "have formed the habit of absenting themselves from our tender companionship every evening in the week, every week in the month, and I might almost say every month in the year, and—— Inasmuch as these said husbands, brothers and lovers have added to the nocturnal absences the sin of gambling away an alarming amount of hard-earned capital, and—— Inasmuch as we, their legal wives, sisters and sweethearts, are being deprived both of their company and those luxuries and necessities which the aforementioned capital might secure,

"It is Resolved, that we, the said victims and sufferers of these persistent absentees and pernicious habits, do form a Club of our own in direct opposition to the one now existing (in parts unknown) and likewise absent ourselves from the domestic hearth, until such time as our husbands, brothers and lovers shall regain their senses, and return to a proper fulfillment of their duties!"

Cries of "Hear!" "Hear!" and "Yes!" "Yes!" were frequent while the lady was speaking, and when she had finished, half a score of daintily gloved hands aided her descent from the treacherous sofa

"Oh, Mrs. Lockwood! How remarkably clever! I am sure no one would ever have thought of such a splendid scheme but you! How I shall enjoy getting square with David!"

Pretty little Miss Summer looked fairly radiant over the situation, but then she had only been engaged a month, and this neglect of her lover's was driving her frantic.

But sedate Mrs. Watrous shook her head a trifle gravely over the unique proposition.

"The plan is excellent, my dear Mrs. Lockwood," she said, kindly, "but how in the world can we learn to gamble?"

For a moment the ladies looked at each other in a maze of perplexity. They had not thought of this before, but now, when they came to compare notes, they had to admit that not one of their number knew the value of one card above another.

"I suppose Harvey would teach me," Mrs. Lockwood said, finally; "that is if I could manage any way to keep him at home a half an hour after dinner."

"Couldn't you turn the clock back?" Mrs. Olmstead suggested, mildly.

"And have him looking at his watch every minute! No, that wouldn't do!" the hostess answered, sorrowfully.

"I tell you what I'll do!" It was pretty Miss Summers that offered the suggestion. "I'll telephone to David that I am sick, and I'm sure he'll leave the office for an hour or two after luncheon. Then I'll be nervous and awfully blue, and finally ask him to teach me to play cards so I can amuse myself with mamma in the evenings. That may bring him to his senses; it ought to if he really loves me?"

"'Love!' Pooh!" exclaimed Mrs. Lockwood, crossly. "Men love nothing but good cigars and —and poker. Better learn that before you are married, Miss Summers."

"But don't you think it is a little bit wicked for women to play?" asked Mrs. Olmstead. "I am sure I should feel dreadfully to have any one know it."

"The end justifies the means, I am sure, Mrs. Olmstead, but of course we are going to keep the matter secret. All card clubs are kept very quiet," added Mrs. Lockwood, knowingly.

At ten o'clock the meeting was adjourned, with the understanding that Miss Summers should learn the game from her lover, "by hook or by crook," and they would meet for the first trial just as soon as success had crowned her efforts.

Just one week from that night, there was a

small but ceremonious gathering at the residence of Mrs. Watrous. Each of the ladies had hurried from dinner, much to the surprise of the male members of the family, and with the utmost secrecy in her movements, arrayed herself for the street, and promptly taken her departure.

"If Miss Summers had been suddenly placed at the head of a regiment she could not have felt or shown more responsibility.

"It is a beautiful game!" she began, enthusiastically, "and really I could almost feel it in my heart to forgive David for leaving me every evening."

Then, as the chairs for six were drawn to the table, she took a dainty pack of cards from her pocket and began to shuffle them in a most astonishing manner.

"Why, how funny! They are all different colors!" Mrs. Norcross exclaimed, as she watched the somewhat unmanageable pasteboards.

Miss Summers smiled pleasantly at her keen appreciation.

"There were so many pretty colors in the store that I just got ten packs, all of them different, then I took five of each of the other colors, and seven of this lovely shade of blue. David said it wouldn't make any difference so long as there were fifty-two, and I didn't mind the expense," she added, proudly.

"I guess we'll manage to get along very nicely now without our husbands. What do you think?" said Mrs. Norcross.

Mrs. Olmstead had just received four cards and was turning them over to look at the patterns on their backs, but she nodded her head in the affirmative answer.

"Why do you put those four on the table, Miss Summers?" Miss Ellery questioned in an anxious manner.

"Those are to pick up, that is if you have any in your hand to match them," replied Miss Summers, explanatory. "For instance, you see I have an eight spot, yes, that's right, one, two, three four, eight," she counted them carefully with the tip of her finger. "You see, I take that five and that three just because they make eight. Oh, it's splendid practice! It keeps you up so in arithmetic."

"But where does the betting come in, Miss Summers?" questioned Miss Ellery, in a still incomprehensible manner.

"Why, you bet that you'll win, and I bet that I'll beat. It's very simple, don't you see it, my dear?"

Mrs. Lockwood was trying experiments with her cards, holding them down close to those upon the table in the hope of aiding her mental calculations, and was just getting ready to see several combinations when Mrs. Olmstead broke in upon her.

"Can I have that ten, I've got a mate to it?" she called with an astonishing sudden insight.

"That's the joker," said Miss Summers, delightedly. "Yes, Mrs. Olmstead, you can have it! Why, you are going to be a splendid player! Let me see what you have, do, Mrs. Norcross!"

Mrs. Norcross obligingly laid down her cards so that Miss Summers and the rest could see them.

"Oh, my! You can build sevens—do build sevens, so that I can take them."

"I don't think I quite understand," poor Mrs. Norcross was beginning to say, but Miss Summers had snatched a three from her hands and was laying it upon a four-spot on the table.

"That don't match!" exclaimed all the ladies in a breath, and then Miss Ellery, turning a little uneasily, asked her if she was really sure that "this game was poker?"

"Certainly it's poker!" Miss Summers cried indignantly, then she smiled upon her in a condescending spirit. "You'll learn it very soon. Oh, dear, I can't take any!"

"I can!" said Mrs. Olmstead gaily, as she picked up a five from the table and added it to the two and three-spots in her hand.

"Now it's Mrs. Lockwood's turn, and as there is only one card left on the table, it means a broom if she can take it. Put your one-spot on it, so, Mrs. Lockwood. Now that counts you two points, because one and one make two. By the way, I forgot; has any one a pencil and paper?"

"Dear me!" almost gasped Miss Ellery, "I never heard of a 'broom' in poker! I am sure you must be wrong, Miss Summers!"

"Oh, I mean a sweep," said Miss Summers, blushing, "but after all a broom and a sweep are pretty much the same thing," she added sweetly.

But Miss Ellery's soul was becoming troubled. She had heard a few poker terms in her somewhat checkered existence, and thus far the game that they were playing had not seemed in any way familiar.

"Shouldn't this be a jack pot, when there are no cards on the table?" she asked with just a shadow of embarrassment.

Mrs. Olmstead blushed, and Mrs. Norcross grew visibly uneasy. She was a member of the church, and there was something offensive and vulgar about Miss Ellery's suggestion.

"Possibly you know more about the game than I do, so perhaps you should teach us," Miss Summers cried out angrily. "I guess my David is familiar with the terms, and he told me nothing about jacks or jack-pots, either!" she finished, bravely.

"It is to be hoped he didn't!" Mrs. Norcross said reprovingly, but by this time Miss Ellery was absolutely sure that she had been correct in her assertions.

"I tell you, ladies, I am perfectly great!" she declared stoutly. "If there was nothing vulgar in a game of poker why should our husbands and brothers and lovers insist upon keeping their pleasure so dreadfully secret ? There are jack-pots in a game of poker, and what is more there

are flushes and full hands and kings high and all sorts of indecent things, and I for one am sorry I ever tried to learn it!"

Here she gave way to an indignant burst of tears, while Miss Summers sat pale and wrathful, and glared at her like an avenging spirit.

It was Mrs. Lockwood who rose to the occasion through sheer force of habit; she had been obliged to quiet just such hysterical riots before in the club-rooms of Sleepytown's Sorosis.

"I am sure Miss Ellery is right, come to think of it," she said decisively, "and I cannot help questioning your morals, Miss Summers, when you so brazenly admit allowing your lover—your lover, not even your husband, mind you—to sit down with you alone—presumably in a darkened parlor—and teach you such a disgusting and disreputable game as poker! Jack-pots! Kings high! For shame, Miss Summers!"

"I move that we throw these wicked cards in the fire and substitute a prayer meeting," Mrs. Olmstead suggested, with a view towards reconciliation.

But the ladies were altogether too excited to compose themselves for prayer at that minute. Miss Summers had risen in a very deluge of tears and denounced Mrs. Lockwood in her bitterest language.

It was no sign because she (Mrs. Lockwood) could not see through the game that she should heap such vituperations on it! She and David had played it for an hour, during broad daylight in the family sitting-room, and the only terms she had heard him use were "cards" and "spades" and big and little something-or-other! But she would not stay to have her character assailed in that manner. She had faith in David, after all, and now she remembered that he had said to her "few women were capable of playing poker."

With this sarcasm she fled precipitately from the room, and for a few moments even Mrs. Lockwood was undecided how to break the silence.

"Men are such unprincipled creatures," she said at last. "Just think of the way in which they spend their evenings!"

"And to think that we ever agreed to learn such a detestable game!" Mrs. Norcross sighed in repentant spirit.

There was another silence while the ladies were adjusting their wraps and bonnets, then it was Mrs. Norcross who referred once more to Miss Summers.

"I think I shall cut her acquaintance," she said, half sadly. "I have always thought there was something that was not quite right about her."

Then they filed out silently and with funereal faces, but before they parted on the steps Mrs. Lockwood delivered her final edict.

"Ladies," she said, this time with a decidedly rising inflection, "you may all do as you like, of course, in this matter, but as for myself, I shall never rest until I know what 'jack-pots' and 'kings high' are doing in a game of poker!"

A NEGRO UTOPIA

THE "promised land" for the Southern negro is in a 35,000 acre tract in Lonoke County, Arkansas, where a new idea negro community is being built and for which a set of laws has been paid down that forbids almost every kind of amusement save "huntin' 'possum" and whose code is "work," on the theory that idleness is the worst enemy of the negro, the old saying about "all work and no play" to the contrary notwithstanding.

There will be no dancing, no shooting "craps," no card playing, no loafing, no fighting. About the only thing that this new and fast growing community will be permitted to do is hunt. Not even baseball is admitted within the limits of lawful amusement.

And the chief aim is the establishment of a big factory to turn out high quality and artistic coffins.

The "promised land" surrounds the community center that has been named Allport and to which 568 families have gone, each to take up and improve forty acres of land. Next year all business, most of which is now conducted by whites, will be taken over by negroes, and one year from now the whole community's law and order, religion, administration and any other work that may fall under these general headings will be in the hands exclusively of negroes who live in the community.

The "bad nigger" is barred. It takes a first rate "character" to gain a place in the community.

The moving spirit for this Utopia for negroes and the one who is responsible for most of the ideas that are being worked out, for the enforcement of its laws and for most of the other things that pertain to living and learning and prospering, is the Rev. R. Amos, negro "elder," as he calls himself, who has been a leader of his race in Arkansas for a good many years. At this particular time, however, he is going through the State conducting meetings for the particular purpose of striking down what he terms "vicious propaganda" aimed to create discord between negroes and whites. He has held sixty-four meetings to teach contentment to his race. His work has been indorsed by Governor C. H. Brough, of Arkansas, and by a good many other white people.

The Mysterious Box

By AN EX-DETECTIVE

STANDING on the arrival platform at the Grand Central Station one night a remarkable-looking man passed me, whose face once seen never could be forgotten.

It was not of foreign cast, yet it had some of its characteristics. The eyes were almond-shaped, the brows arched, and the nose had a Mephistophelean curve that was not only repulsive but actually uncomfortable-looking.

I felt certain I had seen the man before, but could not "place him" all in a moment. I determined to follow him, however, until I recalled the circumstances connected with him, or was satisfied that that could not be accomplished. This I did with all the more readiness since he looked shabby and was accompanied by a pretty little girl of about ten or twelve years of age.

Going to the baggage-room he called roughly, and with a foreign accent, for his box. Presently a long, common, deal chest, painted black, was pushed onto the platform, and the man said:

"You stop there, Mimi, until I come back."

He soon returned with a chauffeur, who seized one end of the chest, but when he felt how light it was he said:

"It don't take two of us to carry this 'ere. I can manage it myself. You and the young 'un can follow."

"All right," said the passenger, taking the little one's hand and giving it a vigorous tug, which made the poor child cry softly.

He got into a taxi and gave an address which at the time was a rather notorious one. It was, in fact, a saloon which had been converted into a sort of common lodging-house for foreigners.

"A fine place for an innocent little girl like that," I murmured to myself, and as the taxi slowly rolled out through the gate, I called a car and told the driver to take me to Prince street.

There I discharged the cab, and lounged toward the house mentioned. In about five minutes the machine arrived, the man alighted and lifted the girl out by one arm, and placed her on the pavement. Then the man assisted him down with his box, the fare was paid, and the crazy old vehicle rattled away again over the uneven asphalt.

I was disguised like an artisan, unshaven, and altogether miserable looking. When the slipshod waiter had helped the man in with his peculiar-looking box, and a bare-armed, coarse-looking woman took charge of the child, I made up my mind to partake of some refreshments in the cafe, so I wandered in and took a seat at one of the imitation marble-topped tables.

"Look you, Margot," the man was saying in French, "if she does not cease weeping give her a stick, and plenty of it. It seems to me that it is nothing but stubbornness, this forever weeping. Take her out of my sight, if you please, and you, Jules, let me have some booze, for I am nearly frozen."

The drink was supplied, and I sat puzzling my brains over this fellow's face and his peculiar voice, while I sipped the coffee I had ordered. It was plain to me that he was no Frenchman, and this made me more at ease, since I had determined to speak to him should occasion offer. He addressed me sooner than I expected.

"Luck is not with you, my friend," he said.

"Very bad indeed," I replied.

"Would you like to earn a dollar?"

"You bet," was my answer.

"Good! Then will you go to a first-class stationer's and get me some good writing-paper and envelopes—paper of the best quality?" and he threw a quarter on the table.

I picked it up and silently went out. In five minutes I returned with what he desired, and calling for pen and ink, he proceeded to write a note slowly and carefully. Having read it through he signed it rapidly, making a great dash under the name. Then he put it in an envelope, and, having addressed it, wrote a monogram on the corner.

"Now I am ready," he said, rising. "If you come with me you shall have a supper fit for a prince to-night, and a few dollars. Let me see; it would be better for both of us if we were shaven. Ah, there is a barber around the corner."

Shaving improved the appearance of both. We set out again, and never halted until we crossed Eighth street, when he told me that we were going to the house of a great financier, shipowner and merchant, in Fifth avenue.

"You will take this letter and ask for Madame ——. That is the wife. The husband is a member of Congress, and abroad, the newspapers say, on business of the government. That is our opportunity. In all probability the butler will say to you: 'What is your business?' To which you will reply: 'I am a messenger from a gentleman at the Travelers' Club.' That is a good joke, and true, too, for we are all travelers. Then you will be told to wait, and the lackey will shut the door."

"Certainly I will wait," I agreed.

"And presently the door will be opened, and you will be asked to receive another letter. You will bring it to me at the corner, and then we shall see what your reward will be."

I did as instructed, confident that I was serving either a begging-letter writer or a black-

mailer. If I did not do as he desired I should, perhaps, be unable to learn his secret. This consideration made me resolve to go through with the affair.

I reached the mansion, and was very roughly received. I, however, told my story plausibly enough, and, as the Mephistophelean rascal prophesied, the door was duly shut in my face. In about ten minutes it was opened again, and a bulky letter given me. This is a plant, I whispered to myself, and I shall be followed and given into custody. In this surmise I was wrong, however, for I reached my employer unmolested, and his impatience was so great that he opened the letter at the next lamp and uttered a cry of joy, brandishing in the air a number of bank notes. What the amount was I did not know, but he gave me ten dollars and invited me around next evening about the same time.

I vowed to outwit this fellow; but circumstances prevented me from keeping that appointment, or from looking after him at all for nearly three months. A case I had been engaged upon for some time became suddenly mature, and I and another officer had to cross the Atlantic after three of the most notorious of modern swindlers.

As soon as I returned to town my memory reverted to this night, so I donned a costume similar to that worn before, and hurried to Forty-second street. Entering the café, I asked for my patron, but no one seemed to understand who I meant.

At last the woman I had seen take charge of the little girl made her appearance, and I questioned her; but she swore that she never saw a child of the description given, and that no man ever appeared there with a black box, as long as she could remember. This puzzled me not a little, and I determined to keep a sharp lookout in the neighborhood.

That was doomed to be fruitless, however, and I was about to give up the pursuit of the man in despair, when business took me in full dress to the opera one night. My surprise may be imagined when, between the acts of "Il Forza del Destino," I came face to face with my shabby friend in the promenade of the dress circle. He was faultlessly attired in the best-fitting garments, and promenading in company with gentlemen of undoubted position, if rather fast and blasé.

Meeting one of my colleagues on the stairway, I pointed the individual out, and inquired if he knew him.

"Oh, yes," he replied. "You mean the Russian—Baron Seljukoff."

"Baron Seljukoff!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," was the answer. "He is perfectly genuine as a baron, but I fancy he owes his fortune to his skill at play. A few weeks ago he was on his beam ends—right down in the world; but he's got a 'lift' again, has taken a nice house near Madison Square and keeps his car. He visits the Baccarat Club in Sixty-ninth street," he went on, "and I fancy is the soul of business there."

"Have you noticed a little girl with him?"

"No, I think not. What makes you ask?"

"I fancy I saw him with a little child when, as you say, he was 'hard up,' but I must be mistaken," I went on as we parted. But nevertheless I was determined to keep a vigilant eye upon the suddenly-enriched gentleman known as the Baron Seljukoff of Russia.

The baron improved in style and appearance every day. He bought horses and rode superb creatures in the park. He drove automobiles and had a fashion of his own in dress. At the same time the Baccarat Club grew in notoriety, and the baron's winnings were estimated as being fabulous. Just when his reputation was at its height he gave up his house and took a splendid suite of apartments in the L—— Hotel. Prominent among his baggage was a common-looking box painted black, and now it was as heavy as the chauffeur pronounced it light before. Admiring waiters said in awe-stricken whispers that it was no doubt filled with bullion.

Walking down to the central office one day his superb limousine passed me. I was pondering over the banknotes he received through me from Mrs. Erlingford, and wondering how much of his reputed fortune he owed to the fears of that lady, when I met a subordinate who told me that the chief was inquiring anxiously about me, and sending in pursuit in all directions.

Hurrying in, I was greeted in an unusually warm manner.

"Here is a case for you," the superintendent cried. "You are required at No. —— Fifth avenue at once."

"Mr. Erlingford's!" I exclaimed.

"You know the house, then? All the better. It is a very bad case, and it is useless for me to explain. The gentleman awaits you at home—he must give you all the particulars."

I took a taxi and drove along, feeling certain that I was about to hear of the so-called baron's persecutions. Arrived at the mansion, I was ushered at once into the presence of the great merchant and financier. I knew him very well by sight, and was not a little amazed at the change that had come over the still far from aged man. His hair was prematurely gray, his eyes sunken, and the eyelids swollen, evidently from want of sleep.

"I am told that I can confide entirely in you," the distinguished member of Congress began. "Will you kindly listen attentively? It appears that it is impossible to solve a mystery that concerns me and my dearest connections without calling in the aid of such a person as yourself. My wife"—the words seemed to choke him—"has been very strange of late. I have tried my best to get her to confide in me, but she will tell me nothing. I have plenty of evidence that great and weighty matters are troubling her, and, being a man, my life has become one long-drawn

pang of pain, for my honor is in her keeping, and while common sense tells me that I should not doubt her, imagination makes me the prey of the most terrible apprehensions.

"Any doubts that gave me comfort were swept away yesterday morning. I was early out to meet a friend, and having parted with him, I determined to walk leisurely home again. Approaching the L—— Hotel, I saw a woman, closely veiled, enter the door. It was my wife, I felt certain, and impulsively I rushed forward and saw her ascend the staircase, following a waiter. Stunned with coming face to face with something I long suspected, I halted for a few seconds. Anger then got the better of me, and I rushed up the stairs, crying, as I reached the top, the woman's name.

"A cry of terror reached me from the second floor. Leaning over the rail, I looked up and saw my wife—or the woman I took for her—knocking at a door upon the wide landing. There came no answer, and so I prepared to ascend the second flight. When I reached near the top I heard another tremulous cry of fear, and fancied I had come upon her. I only reached the landing in time to hear a door close, and the key turned in it inside. It was not the one I saw her knock at, but two doors nearer the top of the stairs. I forgot to say that the woman was carrying something bulky under her cloak. Arrived at the door through which she had disappeared, I knocked vigorously, and in a frenzy of passion demanded my wife to come forth. She never answered—never moved.

"Losing control over myself completely, I shouted, knocked, and kicked the door until the manager and half a dozen waiters came up-stairs. They remonstrated with me, but I asserted that my wife was within there, and demanded that they should open the door and bring her there. It was plain that they pitied my distress. They however, endeavored to bring me away from the rooms, but I struggled and attacked the door again so vigorously that at length there was gathered a great crowd, the majority of whom bitterly complained of being disturbed in their sleep.

"While their clamor was at its highest, the voice of a man was heard from the rooms attacked.

"'Who knocks there?' asked the voice.

"'My wife is within—open the door.'

"The door was opened immediately, and I made a rush to enter; but the tenant of the rooms——"

"A stout dark man, with black eyes and beard, and a villainous hook nose." I put in.

"A tall, handsome, light-haired countryman told me to get away for a madman; said that he was not in the habit of concealing other men's wives.

"'If that is so,' I cried, 'you will permit me to examine your rooms.'

"'You must take my word for it,' he replied, loftily, 'and I must add that if you do not leave me in peace I will forcibly remove you,' and he added," continued the unhappy man, "'I will, by George, as sure as my name is Tom Cunningham.'

"Upon this," continued the member of Congress, "I beat a retreat, for the young man before me was the son of the man who was the guardian of my wife when I married her. I had only received a letter regarding his arrival the day before from his father, containing the information that he had letters of credit on the banking company of which I am the head.

"Completely disgusted with myself, I shut myself up here for several hours, forgetting the friend I left on the watch. When I did recollect him, I ordered the car and drove to relieve him. Upon making my appearance, he leaped forward, and said that the young man I had described came out about noon with something like a jewel-case under his arm. This he took and left at F——'s Repository, where you can secure the key of a compartment, the lock of which no one can open without knowing the word the depositor uses in arranging the letters of the alphabet commanding the secret bolts. I was plunged in despair once more. I believe the case contains my wife's diamonds, which are worth seventy thousand dollars, and it seems clear to me that my wife and this young man have met before, and that they contemplate flight together."

I thought, knowing what I did about the so-called baron, that Mrs. Erlingford must be a terrible woman. I know that the L—— Hotel had an entrance in the back street which would account for the lady's escape, and her presence at home when her husband arrived there.

I went home and dressed in the best style, with a view of making the acquaintance of Mr. Tom Cunningham. Then I drove to the L—— Hotel, stopping, however, to call at F——'s Repository. Introducing myself as an inspector of detectives, I demanded a sight of their deposit book.

Strange to say, the two chief entries on the day before were: "Special Compartment No. 39, one box—Baron Seljukoff." "Special Compartment No. 41, one jewel-case—T. Cunningham." It was only natural that the young fellow should not like to keep such a compromising thing as a jewel case loose in the rooms of a hotel.

I made his acquaintance that night in the dining-room. I soon found him to be a guileless fellow, and presently he told me the story of the morning before. His door was accidentally open, and the lady took refuge there. Of course, he couldn't give her up to the tender mercies of a raving lunatic. He didn't know her name, but believed she would keep her word and come for the jewel-case next day. His chief desire was to get out of the trouble and go about his business, and he begged me to be present in his rooms next day when the lady came to fetch her valuables. It was the very thing I desired.

As he did not know who the lady was he

thought there was nothing wrong in permitting me to listen to the interview next day. The lady explained that it was her husband's busy day, and there was no fear of being interrupted. By an ingenious arrangement of the mirrors in the dressing-room I succeeded in seeing Cunningham's visitor. She was not more than thirty-four or five years of age, and was exquisitely beautiful. I could not believe her to be the monster of guilt circumstances seemed to proclaim her. Mr. Cunningham had written a letter to his father, and placed it on the mantelshelf. Her quick eye caught the address.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, speak!" she cried. "Do you know that gentleman?"

"That gentleman is my father," returned Tom.

"I see the hand of Providence in this," the lady cried, falling on her knees. "He was my guardian when I married Mr. Erlingford."

"Are you Mrs. Erlingford?" asked Tom.

"Yes."

"And that lunatic was my father's friend, the banker?"

"He has been sorely tried."

"Why didn't he mention his name when I mentioned mine. I have to call at the bank to-day."

"But you will not leave me now until you save me from the peril I am in?" cried the lady. "It would be your father's great desire."

"You must explain," said Tom, hesitatingly.

She did explain, and a pitiful story she had to tell. While at school she was followed and courted by a handsome young foreigner named Baron Seljukoff. Overcome by his specious reasoning, she left school and married him secretly. While residing at Brighton Beach another lady claimed him as her husband. I was the man who took him into custody, and it was no wonder that the fellow's face and voice was familiar to me.

He was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, and she, finding herself, through no fault of her own, no wife, applied to her father's oldest friend, Mr. Cunningham, for protection. She told him all, except of the birth of a female child, and in the fullness of time he introduced her to the already prominent banker, Mr. Erlingford.

The child was left with a woman to nurse at Brighton Beach, and there the baron, coming out of prison, found it. From that time—for over ten years—he had been exacting blackmail from the woman he had so heartlessly treated, under threats of exposing the existence of the child and forwarding her early letters to her husband.

If she had only told all to her husband! He loved her too well to be unforgiving. However, she shrank from the confession, and so the villain's demands grew greater and greater, until at last he demanded twenty-five thousand dollars in exchange for her child and letters. As it was impossible to raise that money, she concluded to carry her jewels to the monster, and she was conveying them to him at the L—— Hotel on the morning her husband saw her and followed her.

"My diamonds are my own," she said, "an absolute gift. Will you see this man and hand them to him when he gives you my letters—fifteen in number—and conveys you to where the child will be given up to you as my representative?"

How could Tom refuse? He didn't like dealing with such a scoundrel, but he hoped I would get him out of the difficulty in some way.

I told Tom to write a note to the baron to the effect that Mrs. Erlingford had intrusted him with her diamonds to convey to him on certain conditions, and that he would wait at home that afternoon until seven o'clock. A writer took the note to the baron's rooms, but it was nearly six o'clock before he came in.

After a good deal of talk he presented twelve letters and gave a note with an address as that of the child's refuge.

"And now," he said, "the jewels are mine," and he extended his hands to take the case, which Tom had gone to F——'s to withdraw.

"Oh, no," returned Tom. "I require three more letters, and the address must be verified before I part with anything."

"Indeed! and do you dare to doubt my honor," cried the baron, seizing the jewel-case.

"Put that down!" thundered Tom.

"Never!"

Young Cunningham seized hold of it, and there followed a short struggle in which Tom was getting the best, when the Russian treacherously drew a long stiletto and was about to plunge it into his side.

I appeared at the door upon the instant, revolver in hand.

"Throw that knife on the table at once, or I'll put a bullet through your cowardly heart!" I said—and it was absolutely ludicrous to see the expression that came into his Judas-like face as he precipitately threw the weapon down.

"Out with the other three letters, and no delay," I continued. "Another moment, and I shoot!"

The letters soon lay beside the stiletto.

"And now," I concluded, "I arrest you for the attempted murder of Isabella Morrison—the principal witness against you on your trial for bigamy—on your being released from prison. And if you don't get penal servitude for life for that, there are the other counts of threats to obtain money from the lady you so deeply wronged."

The rascal writhed on the carpet in an agony of fear and despair. In due time he went to prison for life; but no child was found at the address given. He confessed that the girl died, but the authorities believed that he murdered the poor creature. It was whispered that the body was deposited in F——'s in that black box; but as the box had been taken away, and all trace of it lost, there is no proof of this—so there is still some kind of mystery about the baron's black box.

The Game of Love

By CHARLES H. BYRNE

MARY RICHMOND passed and repassed the pawn shop several times. The three balls suggested unutterable things to her. Her heart failed her. She began to think that after all perhaps her scheme would not work, but after fifteen minutes' hesitation her courage returned, and she entered the shop. Going into a little box, she drew from her pocket a ring and handed it to the pawnbroker, who looked inquiringly at her over his glasses.

"I can give you only ten dollars on this, madam."

"That is all I expected," said Mary, taking the money, shoving it into her pocket hurriedly, and walking out upon the street. She looked fearfully up and down, for fear that some of her acquaintances might have seen her.

Five years of wedded life had robbed Mary Richmond of much of her youthful bloom. Her cheeks lacked the roundness of other days, her dimples were more shallow, and her eyes had lost some of their pristine luster. But if care, the arrant thief, had dealt harshly with her beauty, he had not entirely destroyed her faith and trust in her husband. And Mary mused as she sat before the fire, after returning from the pawnshop and preparing the evening meal:

"I know he loves me, but I am afraid he is more enraptured with gambling. If I could only get him to give up playing cards! What fascination there must be in that game! I cannot understand how a lot of cardboards, with foolish pictures painted upon them, can enchain so intelligent a man as Jack. All his money goes into that horrible game, with its 'straights' and 'flushes' and all that disgusting jargon. But I think my little game will beat his in the end. The game of Love, ever since the world began, has been more powerful than any other. The visit to the pawnshop was my first card, and I think it will beat any he holds at the present time. Now I shall prepare my other cards, and I think after I have played them, that he will be obliged to confess that I am a winner."

Animated by the hope which now sustained her, Mary went to the bureau and brought to view a picture of the Huguenot lovers, which Jack had brought her in the days of her courtship. This she intended to use as the ace in her game of love. She placed the picture in a prominent position on the mantel where Jack would be sure to see it when he ate his supper. Then, she changed her dress for a maroon colored garment of which Jack was very fond. This was the king in her little game. In the coil of her black hair she placed a rosebud, and after a coquettish glance in the mirror she hunted up the songs which Jack liked best and placed them in readiness upon the piano. Scarcely had she finished making these preparations when a key grated in the lock and Jack entered the room. There on the doorstep with an expectant flush upon her cheek and an eager light in her eye stood Mary, awaiting him. She looked just as she did ten years before under the apple trees in the orchard. Instead of the virago who had saluted him with angry looks and bitter words, here was a radiant vision, such as he had not seen for several years.

"Why, Mary," he exclaimed, as she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, "I thought——"

"I know what you are going to say," said Mary archly, putting her hand over his mouth. "You expected me to find fault with you for being late. You thought I would frown at you and call you a brute—and—— But there, Jack, sit down and eat your supper, my dear fellow. I am never going to find fault with you any more, no matter what you do. You can play poker, or billiards, or drink whisky, or—or do anything you like, Jack. Only don't speak cross to me and don't stay out late at night."

"Well, well, little woman," exclaimed Jack uneasily, feeling as uncomfortable as a whipped dog. "I—I—I don't understand all this. I——"

"You don't need to understand anything, my love," said Mary naively as she poured out the tea, buttered the toast, and gave Jack an appetizing piece of ham. "Take what the gods give you and don't ask any questions."

Jack was dazed. For nearly two years he had come home to a fault-finding, scolding wife, from whom he had been glad to escape to the more congenial companionship of his friends. Now he caught the glance of a loving woman looking at him over his tea-cup, and watched the graceful outlines of her figure as she made some fresh toast for him. Surely it was a scene from fairyland, Jack thought, as he saw the dimples in Mary's cheeks and listened to her rippling laugh. Could this be the woman who had met him with bitter words and keen invective for two weary years, until life had become a burden and existence a torment? What necromancy had wrought this change? Why, last night Mary had looked as hideous as the Witch of Endor. To-night she was radiant as Hebe, jocund as May and charming as love and hope could make her. Jack looked at the mantel and saw the picture of the Huguenot lovers, which he had given to Mary in the village where he had married her. What thoughts it conjured up of those early days! The gladsome nights, odorous with the breath of June!

The scent of roses and clover blossoms, the merry laughter of his young bride as they stood at the gate together in the moonlight! His dream was interrupted by Mary's voice. She had seated herself at the piano and was singing his favorite song. The sweet tones fell on his ear like the echo of long-forgotten music.

Mary was acting a part, but she acted it well. Her voice trembled as she sang, and she almost choked as the thought of the injustice she had suffered at the hands of the man who had sworn to love and protect her. It was getting rather warm for Jack. The coals on his head were burning him severely. But he lit his cigar and smoked with what appearance of indifference he could summon up. And when the music ceased Mary left the piano and seated herself upon his lap.

"Mary," whispered Jack, as he drew her head down on his shoulder and stroked her hair. "Mary, I'm afraid that I have neglected you shamefully of late. You are punishing me, kid. I wish you would get up and give me one of your old-fashioned tongue lashings. I think it would make me feel better. This kindness of yours upsets me completely.

"Don't talk like that," said Mary; "I have been mean and unjust to you. It is only natural that you should like to get away from me. If I had not been so selfish I should have realized it long ago. We won't say anything more about it, Jack. Of course, I couldn't expect you to give up everything that was dear to you, just because you married me. If it affords you happiness to play cards, my dear boy, I have no right to deprive you of that pleasure."

There was a catch in Mary's voice as she rose from Jack's knee and went to the mantel. Upon it lay the $10 in notes which she had procured from the pawnshop. These she picked up and returned, counting the money out upon his knee, saying as she did so:

"There's ten dollars for you, Jack. I have saved it up so that you could enjoy yourself. It is all I have, and I hope you will get all the fun possible out of it. And—and—Jack, dear, if you lose it, I will try to get some more——"

Jack interrupted:

"But, Mary——"

"There are no 'buts,' Jack, dear; the money is yours and your friends are waiting for it; never mind me. I shall go to bed and sleep. Go downtown and have a good time with your friends. I know they are more interesting than I am, and if you lose this money, come home. I have some jewelry which I can pawn to raise some more for you."

At first Jack refused to touch the money. But Mary put it in his vest pocket, and insisted upon helping him to don his coat. Then she shoved him out of the door. She went into her room, locked the door, and threw herself upon the bed and laughed.

"I knew it would work!" she exclaimed. "No man can resist the game of Love if it is properly played."

And so, chuckling and laughing to herself, Mary fell asleep.

When Jack left the house he was in a dazed condition. He strolled leisurely down the street, chewing reflectively on his cigar.

"I wonder what game the little girl is playing?" he muttered. "It may be a bluff of some kind. If I could only get a glance at her hand I could perhaps know what she is up to."

He went to the club-room, where there was a game in progress, but he refused to play. Somehow cards had lost attraction for him. He thought with self-reproach of how he had left her alone, and blamed himself for his neglect. And so, while still communing with himself, he wended his way homeward, reflecting that after all there was no hand in the world so nice as that which had nestled so confidingly in his two hours since. He stole quietly to bed without awakening his wife, and in the morning she saluted him with a smile which reminded him of apple trees in blossom. All day long the thought of Mary's sweetness filled him with unrest, until, unable to bear the suspense any longer, he hurried home, and turning Mary's face to the setting sun, and looking in her eyes, he said:

"Now tell me all about it. What is the game you are playing? I confess that you hold the winnings cards, but what do you call the game?"

Mary raised her swimming eyes to his and replied:

"It isn't any game at all, Jack. If, however, you want to call it anything, you might call it the game of Love. I think you will agree with me that it is a much more interesting game than poker. There is no 'bluff' in the game as I am playing it. The stake is your heart, Jack. Will you throw down your hand? Will you agree that hereafter you and I shall play this game with more patience than we have done? And may I have the stakes, Jack?"

"Little woman," said Jack in a trembling voice, "I am afraid that I have paid too little attention to this game of Love, but I hope that you will take the pains to initiate me into its mysteries. Mary, sweetheart, you 'cut' and 'deal' and I'll follow your lead."

$600 IN ONE CHICKEN

IT was a tedious process for H. L. Walbourne, a grocer and butcher, at Davenport, Ia., to recover a lost diamond valued at $600 for he was unable to tell which of his 150 chickens had swallowed the gem. The diamond was missing from his ring after he had unloaded the chickens from crates and placed them in a coop and he suspected one of the fowls had eaten it. He found the jewel one day in the gizzard of the fiftieth fowl he slaughtered.

The Meaning of Dreams

HOW TO READ CHARACTER

(*Continued from No.* 73)

54. A face whose cheek bones jut out with thin jaws is of a restless and thinking disposition; fretful and apprehensive of what may happen on the slightest cause, or what may never happen at all; always foreboding evil, without any plausible reason for such fears; more disposed than capable of enjoying the pleasures of love.

55. A face that is pale by nature denotes a timorous disposition, but greatly desirous of the pleasures of love.

56. A face that is unequally red, whether streaked or appearing in spots, shows the person to be weak both in mind and body, yielding easily to affliction and sickness.

57. A face blotched shows the person to be addicted to drinking and vice, and not even free from any vice, though they have frequently the art to conceal the inclination.

58. The head that is large and round shows that the person has tolerable understanding, but not near so good as he imagines; however, upon the whole, he is rather harmless, and not so much given to vice.

59. The head that is small and round, or if the face comes tapering, shows the person of acute, penetrating disposition, much given to bantering and humor, but of very great sensibility; sometimes hurried by caprice, but commonly faithful in love.

60. The head that is flat on either side and deep from the face to the back shows the person to be of a good understanding, deep penetration, great memory, and of an even and agreeable temper, but slow of belief, and not easily imposed upon. He is warm in his affections, just in his dealings, laborious in his profession, and much addicted to sobriety.

We shall conclude this division of our work by presenting our readers with the following curious and instructive information in Physiognomy:

Strength of body is known by a stiff *hair*, large bones, firm and robust limbs, short muscular neck, firm and erect, the head and breast high, the forehead short, hard and peaked, with bristly hair, large feet, rather thick than broad, a harsh, unequal voice and choleric complexion.

Weakness of body is distinguished by a small, ill-proportioned head, narrow shoulders, soft skin and melancholy complexion.

The signs of long life are strong teeth, a sanguine temperament, middle stature, large, deep and ruddy lines in the hand, large muscles, stooping shoulders, full chest, firm flesh, clear complexion, below growth, wide ears and large eyelids.

Short life may be inferred from a thick tongue, the appearance of grinders before the age of puberty; thin, straggling and uneven teeth; confused lines in the hand; of a quick but small growth.

A good genius may be expected from a thin skin, middle stature, blue, bright eyes, fair complexion; straight, pretty, strong hair; an affable aspect, the eyebrows joined, moderation in mirth, an open, cheerful countenance, and the temples a little concave.

A dunce may be known by a swollen neck, plump arms, sides and loins, a round head, concave behind, a large, fleshy forehead, pale eyes, a dull, heavy look, small joints, snuffling nostrils and a proneness to laughter, little hands, an ill-proportioned head, either too big or too little, blubber lips, short fingers and thick legs.

Fortitude is promised from a wide mouth, a sonorous voice, grave, slow and always equal, upright posture, large eyes, pretty, open and steadfast, the hair high above the forehead, the head much compressed or flattened, the forehead square and high, the extremities large and robust, the neck firm, though not fleshy, a large, compulent chest and brown complexion.

Boldness is characterized by a prominent mouth, rugged appearance, rough forehead, arched eyebrows, large nostrils and teeth, short neck, great arms, ample chest, square shoulders and a froward countenance.

Prudence is generally distinguished by a head which is flat on the sides, a broad, square forehead, a little concave in the middle, a soft voice, a large chest, thin hair, light eyes, either blue, brown or black, large eyes and an aquiline nose.

A good memory is commonly attached to those persons who are smaller, yet better formed in the upper than the lower parts, not fat but fleshy, of a fair, delicate skin, with the poll of the head uncovered, crooked nose, teeth thick set, large ears with plenty of cartilage.

A bad memory is observable in persons who are larger in their superior than inferior parts, fleshy though dry and bald. N. B.—This is expressly contrary to the opinion of Aristotle, who says that the superior parts being larger than the inferior signify a good memory, and vice versa.

A good imagination and thoughtful disposition are distinguished by a large, prominent forehead, a fixed and attentive look, slow respiration and an inclination of the head.

(To be continued)

Current News

WEARS SUIT MADE BY GRANDMOTHER.

Robert E. Carver, 66 years of age, a retired tobacco grower and breeder of blooded stock, living on the Petersburg Pike, Lawrenceburg, Ind., is wearing a homespun suit of clothes that was made for his father by his grandmother in 1870. The cloth was made of flax spun by his grandmother and the coat is the style of 1870, a long frock, and the trousers have large legs. The suit is in good condition.

BIG HOG DODGES BUTCHER, BUT DIES.

"Jumbo," believed to have been one of the largest hogs in the United States, is dead at the Sutherlin brothers' farm, near Russellville, Ind. He weighed 1,350 pounds. "Jumbo" was of the Big Type Poland variety, and was sired by Mammoth Giant, by Disher Giant, and was to have been exhibited at the Illinois and Indiana State Fairs, and the International Stock Show at Chicago. The hog was one of the most widely known show hogs in the country.

SQUIRRELS BIG AS CATS.

There is no country that can rival North America for the great number of squirrels, both species and subspecies, represented in her fauna. In so far as brilliancy of color and size are concerned, however, says the American Forestry Magazine, of Washington, the handsomest and largest squirrels in the world are found in the Orient and the East Indies. Along the coast of Malabar is found a squirrel as big as an ordinary cat. This animal is bright red on the upper part of its body, offset by the most intense black, while all the lower parts are of a clear yellow.

MOVIE THEATRE CHECKS CIGARS.

A moving picture theatre in Bardwell, Ky., has adopted a first aid to economy. On the right of the entrance to the theatre is a check stand for cigars. As men go into the place, instead of littering up the front of the show with their cigar butts, they put them in little jars on the wall and take a check out showing the number of the jar. When the show is over the butts are lighted up again and a dime or a quarter is saved, and the owner of the theatre is saved the expense of hiring a negro boy to sweep up the butts the following morning.

A WHISTLING TREE.

Among the curiosities of tree life is the sofar, or whistling tree, of Nubia. When the wind blows over this tree it gives out flute-like sounds, playing away to the wilderness for hours at a time strange, weird melodies. It is the spirit of the dead singing among the branches, the natives say, but the scientific white man says that the sounds are due to a myriad of small holes an insect bores in the spines of the branches. The weeping tree of the Canary Islands is another arboreal freak. This tree in the driest weather will rain down showers from its leaves, and the natives gather up the water from the pool formed at the foot of the trunk, and find it pure and fresh. The tree exudes the water from innumerable pores at the base of the leaves.

SCENTED LETTERS A RUSE

Some clever business men are using scented notepaper to make sure that their communications will reach the proprietors of large establishments whose patronage they seek. And to make surer, these communications are addressed in feminine handwriting. Even a private secretary shrinks from opening such a missive.

Writing to a London newspaper, the general manager of a great wholesale establishment calls this new insinuating method "the latest manifestation of the alert post-war commercial mind.

"In my case," he says, "the buyers are a body not over given to encouraging new blood. They are likely to be conservatively content with those who are comfortably established in their 'ring.' But a letter in a woman's handwriting on nice notepaper, delicately scented, got through the 'ring.' It reached me, and to my astonishment I found the information distinctly worth while from a business point of view."

AN IGNORANT MOTHER

A young mother recently brought her baby to the Nothern Central Hospital, London, and the medical officer on examination found that the child was suffering from convulsions. He prescribed the necessary treatment, and the mother inquired as to what procedure she should adopt in the event of the child suffering from a similar attack. The doctor advised her to put the baby into a bath of warm water. A few weeks later the mother again brought her child to the hospital, and the doctor, on a further examination, discovered signs of the infant having been burned. He inquired of the parent the cause of the injury, when she stated that upon the child receiving a further attack, and she not having any warm water available at the moment, placed the baby in a bath of cold water, which she placed upon the fire in order to bring the water to the necessary temperature.

The hospital is sending out instructors to inform the people in its neighborhood that babies must not be boiled.

CATFISH USED IN STREET CLEANING.

In one of the towns of Oregon the familiar catfish figures as a hardy pioneer, and a valued adjunct to the street department, all because the terra cotta sewers and drains, especially those in the lower part of the town, frequently get choked.

If the sewer is not broken it can be cleaned by passing a rope through it to be pulled backward and forward until the obstruction is loosened and removed. The deputy superintendent of streets had a great deal of such work to look after, but at last he discovered a quick, sure and easy method.

He goes to the river, catches a catfish, ties a string to its tail, drops it down a manhole into the sewer, and it at once starts for the river and forces its way through any obstruction not as solid as brick, dragging the string after it. Then the deputy goes as far down the sewer as he deems necessary and picks up the string, which he uses to draw a wire through the sewer, and with this a rope is pulled through and the sewer is soon cleared.

BOTTOM DROPPED OUT OF DEEGAN'S PASTURE

Twenty-five acres of Charles Deegan's farm, near Burke, S. Dak., suddenly sank thirty feet one night, recently, and where once his best pasture lay he has nothing but a lot of not very beautiful scenery. It dropped straight downward, leaving here and there pinnacles ten feet in diameter and thirty feet high. Geologists say that the land was probably supported in the past by a subterranean lake that has been emptied in some mysterious manner. They base this on the fact that a number of low-lying surface ponds and lakes have lately filled up.

The sunken piece was the favorite part of the pasture, and the night before the big drop the cattle that usually occupied it refused to leave the shelter of the farm buildings, bellowing mightily and running back every time they were driven to that corner of the field.

The Deegan farm contains a deep protected canyon in which there are boiling springs, and flowers bloom in the canyon all the year and the grass is always green. Five years ago the birds discovered in it an ideal winter resort, and since then thousands of them save the long Southern hike and nest there in their steam-heated apartments.

"SEEING" THE HUMAN VOICE.

A man made ear, similar in its principles to the mechanical eye lately invented by Prof. Brown, of the University of Iowa, has just been completed by Prof. Carl S. Seashore, of the psychological department of the same university, says the American Boy.

The novel invention is known as the "tonoscope," named for its power to distinguish differentiations in tone and voice pitch in varying degrees. Although the construction is very simple, the application of the instrument to the instruction of the deaf is highly interesting. A long tube, firmly fastened, is placed directly in front of a lighted candle. A screen is adjusted so that the flame of the candle will cast reflections on it, while the other end of the tube is placed in a position so that a person may talk into it.

As a man speaks into one end of the tube the sound waves caused by his voice are thrown against the candle flame, causing a variation in the reflection on the screen with each different pitch. The fact that these waves can be shown in this way has long been known, but its application is interesting.

The real application of the tonoscope, however, is not in this manner, but to teach the deaf to speak. It is a well-known fact that deaf persons possess voices of unusual harshness, due to the fact that they cannot hear their own vocal efforts and thus cannot regulate their intensity and pitch. Through the tonoscope, a teacher may speak into the tube, giving a sentence or word at the proper pitch. The pupil then may repeat the given word or sentence, attempting to get as nearly the same variation in reflection to that of the teacher as possible.

WHY DO THEY CALL IT PIN MONEY?

The expression originally came from the allowance which a husband gave his wife to purchase pins. At one time pins were dreadfully expensive, so that only wealthy people could afford to buy them, and they were saved so carefully that in those days you could not have looked along the pavement and found a pin which you happened to be in need of, as you can and often do to-day.

By a curious law the manufacturers of pins were only allowed to sell them on January 1st and 2d each year, and so when those days came around the women whose husbands could afford it secured pin money from them and went out and got their pins.

Pins have become so very cheap in these days that we are rather careless with them, but the expression has continued to live, although to-day, when used, it means any allowance of money which a husband gives a wife for her personal expenses.

Pins were known and used as long ago as 1347 A. D. They were introduced into England in 1540. In 1824 an American named Might invented a machine for making pins, which enabled them to be manufactured cheaply. About 1,500 tons of iron and brass are made into pins every year in the United States.—The Book of Wonders.

INSECTS WOULDN'T DIE.

An instance of the extraordinary tenacity of life of certain insects, especially in the larva stage, is told by Dr. R. W. Shufeldt of Washington, in the Medical Record. He cites a case of wasps sitting preening themselves an hour after their heads had been cut off; of butterflies, after a bath of pure chloroform, reviving on the spreading board to which they had been pinned and exerting such strength as to pull out the pins that transfixed them.

But the most remarkable case of all was that of a wireworm or larva of a click beetle. This, after being picked up, fought and bit with its hooked scissors-like jaws till it drew blood from the doctor's finger. He put it in a pill box with some rotten wood and a few days later dipped it in pure formalin. This did not kill the larva, so it was dropped into 95 per cent. alcohol, where it remained for fully a minute. This seemed to stiffen it out, and Dr. Shufeldt sent it in a sealed glass vial to Dr. E. A. Schwarz of the United States National Museum in Washington. Several days later Dr. Schwarz returned it in the same bottle. The larva was then as lively as on the day it had been captured.

Dr. Shufeldt put it in a glass jar, in which it thrived for several weeks. From this he transferred it to a vial closed with a cork, where after remaining without food, water or change of air for ten days it began to eat its way through the cork. It was transferred then to a sealed glass tube, in which it remained for nearly two months, when it gradually shrivelled up and died. From early in May until the end of August the only liquid that had come near it was formalin and alcohol, either of which would instantly kill most insects.

COSMIC BOMBS AND LUNAR CRATERS

That the craters of the moon were produced by the impact of gigantic meteors, striking like bombs from the outside, instead of, as has hitherto been supposed, by volcanic action from the inside, is the theory set forth by Dr. Herbert E. Ives in the Astrophysical Journal. Dr. Ives presents as evidence some photographs taken from an airplane showing craters produced by bombs dropped by aviators. These holes reproduce in a striking manner the appearance of lunar craters, including the circular wall, central peaks and short radiating streaks.

Dr. Ives points out that the serious objections which have hitherto been raised to the idea that lunar craters were produced by the impact of meteors do not apply if we regard the meteor not merely as a projectile but as an explosive bomb. That the impact of the meteor on the surface of the moon would, in fact, produce a violent explosion appears to follow from a simple calculation of the heat generated in the process. Not only does this explanation take care of the general appearance of the craters, but it affords an answer to the perplexing question presented by the almost uniformly circular shape of the lunar craters; for the symmetrical form would result from an explosion regardless of the angle at which the meteor struck.

As to the objection that the earth does not show similar effects of bombardment, if we disregard the unique case of Canon Diablo, "the most complete answer is found by noting, first, that the earth is surrounded by an atmosphere which in previous ages must have been much denser than now and so would dissipate the energy of falling meteors, as indeed we see it doing now; and, second, that the earth's surface has been undergoing the processes of upheaval and weathering for perhaps countless ages since the collision with the giant meteor swarms which permanently marked the dead and atmosphereless lunar surface."

BIMINI, THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH.

It may not be generally known that Bimini, that small West Indian isle so conveniently situated in the Atlantic off the Florida coast, was at one time thought to contain the fountain of youth. It was conquered and explored by the early Spaniards for no other reason than this—they fancied they had learned from the half understood speech of savages in Hispaniola that the wonderful fountain to drink from which made a young man out of an old one flowed there.

The legend of a fountain of youth had persisted from the first utterance of that lie by that famous liar Sir John Mandeville, who so successfully hid his identity that nobody knows whether the author of his "Book" was a man or a syndicate. It has been proved that there was no Sir John Mandeville. Whoever the writer was, he stole the story from Marco Polo, who said he got it from another mythical personage, Prester John. It ran from the twelfth century to the sixteenth, and it may be running yet.

Juan Ponce de Leon, who seems to have disliked the thought of old age, always felt hopeful of finding this fountain on the Asiatic coast, which he thought, like the discoverers before him, was that we now call Florida. He had heard, or thought he had, the Indians talk of a marvellous fount which they located in Bimini, and he sought and obtained permission to go and annex this island to Spain. This was in March, 1513. He explored Bimini carefullly, but did not discover the fountain, and then transferred his search to the larger island that he supposed Florida to be.

Four hundred years have gone by and the search for youth—temporary, if not permanent—is again being made in the pretty little island, where it is easily found, travellers from a bone-dry country aver, in bottles.

MAN REGULATES HIS HEART BEATS AT WILL

A man who runs his heart at will on either high or low gear has been giving Johns Hopkins Medical School specialists startling exhibitions of his power. Experts say it is the first case of its kind to be recorded beyond dispute.

On one occasion the subject's heart registered 108 beats a minute. At a word from the experts, he increased the speed to 131, holding it at that rate for seventeen minutes before dropping to 117. He told the doctors when he was increasing and when he was slowing up.

It developed that he could vary his beats when exhaling or inhaling, and that he could make his heart go twenty to forty throbs more a minute at will while holding his breath.

Dr. John T. Kings, Jr., instructor of clinical medicine, conducted the experiments, with Dr. Donald R. Hooker keeping the official score. They found no palpitation as a functional or organic disease.

WASTERS AND LOAFERS.

"Of all economic fallacies the most damaging is that which contends that wasteful expenditure and idleness are of benefit to a community," says William Feather in Through the Meshes. "You frequently hear it said of a wealthy man, 'Why doesn't he quit work?' A man's earning power is the measure of his productive capacity. Society is interested in production because the more production the greater prosperity.

"Therefore the premature retirement from business of a man with ability to organize and carry forward creative enterprises is a social loss.

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37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain On Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Charles F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
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TIMES AFTER CIVIL WAR

The dearth of houses and high rentals are not unprecedented; practically the same situation prevailed following the Civil War, according to William Shepard.

"I was then living on the west side of Lafayette Avenue, near Marcy Avenue, Brooklyn, and occupied a three-family brick house," said Mr. Shepard. "The rental was $250 a year. The landlord served warning that because of the high cost of living he would have to raise the rent to $600 a year. A friend living on Staten Island advised me to move there and where rents were cheaper. This was in 1866. I did so, renting a two and a half-story frame house on St. Paul's Avenue, Tompkinsville, for $300 a year. But in those days there were no improvements in dwelling houses.

A short time ago I saw the house in Brooklyn where I had lived fifty-four years ago. Aside from the installation of modern improvements it was unchanged. We thought in 1866 that the $300 I was paying for a year's habitation of the three-story house at Lafayette and Marcy Avenues was a high figure. Before that I had rented three-story brick houses near and $150 a year.

GOVERNMENT "YEGGS" TEST BANK VAULTS

Government experts are emulating the "Jimmy Valentines" of the underworld at the Bureau of Standards in their effort to decide upon the type of vault to be selected for Federal Reserve Board deposits. A number of vaults, embodying the latest anti-burglar ideas, have been completed, and tests are now under way to determine if they are sufficiently "proof" to be intrusted with the millions of dollars which the board distributes among members of the Reserve System.

The specimen vaults are of concrete, reinforced with various materials guaranteed to discourage the most patient drill pusher. In some of them sheets of case-hardened steel have been inserted between layers of concrete, while iron rails, arranged in tiers, have been placed in others. A quantity of hard glass is to be tested in one vault, the opinion having been expressed that this material will dull the sharpest drill, while fusing before an oxycetylene torch.

Dynamite and the more strenuous "soups" will be used by the Government experts, as well as every mechanical method yet put forward by the masked cult.

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AN EASY WAY TO REDUCE

No starving process for you. Eat all you need. No strenuous exercising. No salts or other such purgatives. No calomel, thyroid or other drastic drugs. No loss of time. A pleasant method of personal, or home self-treatment easy to follow and inexpensive. Adopt the internationally popular Korein system of which a component is

WHY NOT BECOME SLENDER?

To lengthen your life; to lessen the dangers of sunstroke, apoplexy or other prostrations; to lessen your risk of pneumonia and numerous other ailments; to give your heart a chance to become strong; to improve the condition of your stomach and nerves; to obtain a sure perfect figure and real vivacity—follow the Korein system.

Oil of Korein

The Gentle Way To Reduce

For Men and Women

BECOME SLENDER AND STAY SO

You may obtain Oil of Korein (in tabules for easy use) at the drug store. Or, if the druggist hasn't it in stock he will obtain it. Or send $1 to Korein Company for a box; will come to you in plain wrapper. Remit by money-order, cash or stamps.

$100 GUARANTEE

So positive are we of the efficacy of the Korein system that we supply it under a $100 CASH GUARANTEE which means that we will refund every cent of your money if you follow the simple directions that come with each box of Oil of Korein. Tell your acquaintances about this!

BOOK SENT FREE

Our booklet, "Reduce Weight Happily," tells more about the remarkable Korein system. It will be mailed free (in plain wrapper) on request.

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